**“PENGUIN TRAINING”**

**SAFE PRACTICES POLICY**

**FAITH UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**TINLEY PARK, ILLINOIS**

**2014**

*Approved by Session on May 27, 2014*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Child abuse is a serious problem in our society and, unfortunately, within the Christian community. Abuse often occurs in settings where children completely trust adults—homes, schools, camps, athletic and park programs, retreats and the church. As people entrusted with the lives of children, we believe that we have a profound moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of abuse from happening to the children who attend activities of Faith United Presbyterian Church of Tinley Park. The purpose of this document is to help make church activities a safer place for our children by instituting the boundaries that guard against abuse. These policies and procedures are designed to help our community to:

* Safeguard the children and youth from abuse.
* Provide assurance to families that their children are safe and secure at Faith United activities.
* Provide emotional and spiritual support to youth and their families if such abuse takes place.
* Assure proper reporting when there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred.
* Assuring safe boundaries for volunteers.

**II. STATEMENT OF POLICY**

This policy governs the Faith United Presbyterian Church of Tinley Park, all activities sponsored by or under the control of the church and is recommended to the Session. This policy governs conduct with children as defined in this policy. The environment of Faith United is to be free from any form of abuse. Violation of this policy shall be considered grounds for disciplinary action, pastoral counsel, and/or possible legal action. It is required that staff, volunteers and other leaders at Faith United activities behave according to these procedures.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

***ABUSE***: Conduct that harms or has the potential to harm a child physically, sexually, or emotionally with inappropriate aggression, sexual contact, verbal harassment, or negligence.

***ACCUSED***: The person against whom an accusation of abuse or neglect is made.

***ACCUSER***: The person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct, neglect or abuse by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not be the victim of alleged sexual misconduct, neglect or abuse.

***ACTIVITY***: A program or event sponsored by or under the control of Faith United.

***CHILD***: A person under the age of 18 years

***MANDATED REPORTER***: A person required by law to report to the appropriate state agency all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect that come to their attention. Regardless of whether they are mandated reporters under the law, all employees of Faith United and volunteers working with children are responsible for informing the Pastor or person in charge of the activity of all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect and to ensure that the state agency (Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in Illinois) is informed, as appropriate. If the incident takes place in a state other than Illinois, the child and family services in that state will be informed as required by law.

***NEGLECT***: The failure of a parent or responsible caretaker to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other basic necessity to a child.

***CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE***: Abuse against a child that is sexual in nature. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual contact or interaction between an adult and a child is always considered forced and abusive whether or not consented to by the child.

***PARENT***: A parent or legal guardian of a child participating in an activity.

***PERSON IN CHARGE OF ACTIVITY***: The person designated to lead and take responsibility for the activity. She/he MUST be a staff member or volunteer as defined by this policy and must have completed all required training and screening.

***USER GROUPS***: A group that participates in any activity or event sponsored by Faith United or that utilizes a facility owned by Faith United.

***QUALIFIED ADULT***: A person over 21 having a valid background check and not in the same family as another volunteer.

***RESPONSE***: The action taken by the governing body or entity when a report of sexual misconduct or abuse is received. It may include inquiry into facts and circumstances, or possible disciplinary action up to and including termination.

***SEXUAL MISCONDUCT***: Conduct that results in or has the potential to result in child sexual abuse.

***STAFF MEMBER****:* A person employed by or contracted with Faith United.

***VICTIM***: A child who has allegedly suffered an act of sexual misconduct, abuse or neglect.

***VOLUNTEER***: A person who provides services for Faith United and/or one of its entities and receives no remuneration. Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees and other groups. Volunteers must work with at least one qualified adult (see above).

**IV. GENERAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

1. To be eligible to work with youth, all volunteers **MUST** submit to a background check and receive safe boundaries training. Training needs to be renewed every five years.
2. BULLYING PROHIBITED—ANY VERBAL, PHYSICAL OR CYBER BULLYING IS PROHIBITED.
3. All Sunday school classes may be supervised by one qualified adult and one roving adult.
4. For activities on church property involving children in 6th grade or below, a second chaperone may be age 16 or older and in 9th grade or higher to be an assistant for the qualified adult.
5. All church school activities involving minors away from church property must be supervised by at least two adults age 21 or over who are not members of the same family. An emergency contact information sheet and a youth event permission form must be filled out by every child attending.
6. Exceptions to the two-adult rule:
7. Activities in the church building, provided another qualified adult is circulating throughout the activities.
8. When deemed necessary by an adult in charge due to emergency or other exigent circumstances.
9. **No corporal punishment of any kind is to be used**. If the adults in charge feel they cannot manage a child’s behavior, or if they find it necessary to remove a child from an activity, they are to contact the parent first followed immediately by contacting the Pastor and/or the CE Elder.
10. All children pre-k to 3rd grade are to be escorted to the bathroom by an adult (leaving the classroom door open if only one adult remains there). According to the child’s preference, the adult is to stand outside the bathroom or just inside the bathroom with the main door ajar. Older children in 4th through 6th grades should be escorted if the supervising adult judges it appropriate. Children are to be encouraged to wait until class is over to use the bathroom with a parent/guardian.
11. No behavior or communication of a sexual nature directed to a child or youth by an adult will be tolerated. Sexual abuse is any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a minor or with a young person who participates in a chaperoned group, whether alleged to be consensual or not. Oral and written communication of a sexual nature is included in this definition.
12. Report any SUSPECTED violation of the safe practices policy, including any injury to a child or youth, even if accidental. An injury report form must be filled out with one copy going to the parent and one copy going to the office file. A report may be made to the Pastor, chair of the Personnel ministry, Clerk of Session, or the CE Elder. An anonymous report may also be made to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services at 1-800-25ABUSE.
13. Adults are not to allow children to sit on their laps, hug a child below the shoulders or work with a child alone.

**V. TRAINING OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Training as to how to report suspected abuse or neglect is necessary for all staff and volunteers coming in contact with children. Training will include, at a minimum:

1. A copy of the Faith United Safe Practices Policy will be provided to all staff members and volunteers prior to starting work. They will also sign that they have read the document. In addition, for each activity, guidelines will be given for acceptable and appropriate behavior.
2. Those working with children will be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of neglect and of physical and sexual abuse prior to working with said children.
3. Training will be given regarding procedures to follow when an incident of suspected abuse, neglect or misconduct is to be reported.
4. Training will be under the supervision of the Child Protection Administration Commission of Faith United and will be reviewed annually.
5. Staff and volunteers who are clergy shall sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status (Clergy) form of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Non-clergy staff who are mandated reporters under Illinois law shall sign the DCFS Acknowledgment of Mandated Reporter Status form.
6. Staff and volunteers who are mandated reporters will be provided with copies of the DCFS manual for Mandated Reporters for Illinois

**VI. USER GROUPS**

User groups will be given a copy of the Faith United Safe Practices Policy and acknowledge that they have read it. User groups are responsible for the following policy:

1. Youth groups will have at least two adult supervisors.
2. In addition to having a minimum of two adult supervisors for each event, the following ratios of adults to children will be maintained:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| YOUTH AGE | ADULT | OVERNIGHT EVENTS | DAY EVENTS |
| 4-5 years | 1 | 5 children | 6 children |
| 6-8 years | 1 | 6 children | 8 children |
| 9-14 years | 1 | 8 children | 10 children |
| 15-18 years | 1 | 10 children | 10 children |

1. At no time should an adult and a youth be one on one. This includes transportation to and from the event. This standard does not apply if the adult is the parent or legal guardian of the child.
2. Exceptions to the two-adult rule:
3. Activities in the church building, provided another qualified adult is circulating throughout the activities.
4. When deemed necessary by an adult in charge due to emergency or other exigent circumstances.

**VII. RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT**

**Immediate Safety**. If there is an immediate danger to any person, the staff member or volunteer shall take all necessary steps to insure the person’s safety.

**Reporting Protocol**

1. **Initial Report to Faith United**

A staff person or volunteer having knowledge of an incident of suspected child abuse or neglect shall report the incident immediately to the Pastor or to the person in charge of the activity. When the initial report is made to the person in charge of the activity, the person receiving the report will immediately inform Faith United. For purpose of this section VII, if the Pastor is the accused or is unavailable to act, references to the Pastor shall be deemed to refer to the Child Protection Administrative Commission (CPAC). Any behavior initiated by a minor is to be reported as well.

1. **Report to Child Abuse Hotline**

CPAC will determine if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child participating in a Faith United activity is an abused or neglected child. If CPAC has insufficient information to determine whether reasonable cause exists, they shall make further inquiry sufficient to make the determination. If the CPAC determines that reasonable cause exists to suspect child abuse or neglect, he or she will immediately call the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), or the applicable state or county child abuse hotline. The oral report must be followed by a written report on the applicable state reporting form. If the state authorities determine that the incident should be investigated, they will normally contact the police. See Appendix E for information on child abuse hotlines and mandated reporters.

1. **Mandated Reporters**

Under most state child protection statutes, mandated reporters are professionals who may work with children in the course of their professional duties and are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Clergy are mandated reporters under the Illinois statutes. For purposes of the Safe Practices Policy, the Pastor shall be considered a mandated reporter under state law. Faith United staff and volunteers who are clergy and who have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, are required by Illinois law to report directly to the DCFS hotline as provided in the foregoing subsection 2. If the Pastor determines that reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect does not exist, or fails to make a report, a clergy member who has knowledge of the incident and believes that reasonable cause does exist to suspect child abuse or neglect is required to make the report. Finally, Faith United staff and volunteers who are neither clergy nor other professionals named in the applicable state statutes are not mandated reporters under the law. Staff and volunteers who are not mandated reporters may, nevertheless, report an incident to the State Child Abuse Hotline if they have reasonable cause to suspect that child abuse or neglect may have occurred. See Appendix E for information on child abuse hotlines and mandated reporters. In addition to the state statutes regarding mandated reporters, Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Elders and Deacons are required by the Book of Order to report knowledge of harm or the risk of harm related to the physical abuse, neglect and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities (G-4.03). The reporting protocol described in this subsection is designed to satisfy the Book of Order requirements.

1. **Incident Report Form**

In addition to any state reporting form that may be required, within 48 hours after the incident, each staff member or volunteer with knowledge of the incident shall complete a Faith United Incident Report Form and deliver the form for review. All injuries (bruises, cuts, nose bleeds etc.) are to be reported to the child’s parent/guardian the same day as the occurrence. Any behavior initiated by a minor is to be reported as well.

1. **Notification of parent/guardian**

As soon as practicable after receiving the initial report of the incident, the Pastor, appropriate Elder and witness shall inform the child’s parent/guardian of the incident.

1. **Suspension/Administrative Leave**

After receiving the initial report, the Pastor and the CPAC shall immediately suspend the accused staff person or volunteer from all activities involving contact with children. The suspension shall remain in effect until the Pastor/CPAC determines that the accused no longer poses a potential threat to children. If the accused is a Minister of Word and Sacrament against whom a written statement of alleged offense is filed pursuant to the following subsection, the Permanent Judicial Commission shall determine whether the accused shall be placed on paid administrative leave pursuant to the Rules of Discipline and the Faith United policy on administrative leave.

1. **Investigation**

The person or persons making the initial report to the Pastor shall not conduct an investigation of the incident, but shall take all necessary steps to insure the child’s immediate safety. After receiving the initial report of the incident, the Pastor/CPAC shall make sufficient inquiry to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a child participating in a Faith United activity is an abused or neglected child. If reasonable cause exists, the applicable state child protection agency will normally notify law enforcement and investigate the incident after being notified by the Pastor/CPAC. If church disciplinary procedures are commenced, the investigating committee will conduct its own investigation. The insurance company of the Presbytery of Chicago may also conduct a separate investigation. The Executive Presbyter shall determine to what extent the incident needs to be investigated separately by the Presbytery of Chicago for its own purposes or to provide adequate information to another governing body that may have an interest. Any such separate investigation by the Presbytery of Chicago shall be performed at the direction of and under the supervision of the Executive Presbyter.

1. **Confidentiality**

In accordance with both civil law and Presbyterian polity, the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. While the incident is being investigated, all persons with knowledge of the incident shall maintain strict confidentiality and shall share information with others only as requested or permitted by the Pastor/CPAC. The Pastor/CPAC shall be in exclusive possession of all reports and other written materials pertaining to the incident. No other person shall keep copies of reports or other records concerning the incident without authorization from the CPAC.

**VIII. SCREENING PROCEDURES**

Screening procedures will be followed for all employees and volunteers working with children on a regular basis.

Screening includes:

1. Completion of application form with references. Potential staff will complete the usual Faith United application at the time of hiring. Potential volunteers will complete the application form attached as Appendix A and B.
2. Reference checks managed and documented by the Faith United CPAC.
3. Background checks for all staff and volunteers.
4. Copy of driver’s license or state identification kept on file in the Safe Practices locked files.

All information gathered in the screening process will be kept in a secure location and will be kept strictly confidential, with access permitted only to those few persons who have a legitimate need to know. The original of all information for non-clergy will be kept in the locked Safe Practices files at Faith United for a minimum of five years after the person ceases to be a staff member or volunteer, and copies will be kept electronically indefinitely. Original personnel files for clergy will be retained indefinitely. Parents who are providing transportation must provide a copy of their driver’s license and a copy of their insurance card. All parents attending an activity may, at the discretion of the person in charge of the activity for Faith United, be asked to undergo any or all of the screening procedures for volunteers as outlined above. Any parent staying overnight at any activity shall at a minimum undergo the interview as described above.