

Minor Protection

Policy & Procedures Manual

Approved by session on (DATE): 1/5/2023

Introduction

Prologue
We live in a world and time where the incidences of reported child abuse have steadily increased. This, rightly so, is of great concern to all institutions, not least of which is the church. Because of the Church's mission to make disciples of Christ, South CLT Pres is deeply committed to protecting minors and those who care for them with a Christ-like love.

Jesus Christ is the head and king of the church (Eph 1.22-23) and as such he has set up officers in his church to shepherd his people with love, care and authority (1 Timothy 3.1-13; Titus 1.5-9; 1 Pet 5.1-4). South CLT Pres will strive to work together with civil authorities if and when matters of abuse arise but will lead and care for the people entrusted to its care for the ultimate goal of the glory of God.

The purpose of this policy is to protect minors of the church as well as to reclaim disobedient sinners through a discipline and restoration process. Furthermore we seek to protect faithful servants as they work with minors. In all cases of church discipline the church will apply discipline to the offender for the glory of God, the purity of His Church, and the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners (Book of Church Order 27.3).

Minor Protection Policy
South Charlotte Presbyterian Church (South CLT Pres) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all minors who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the minors of South CLT Pres from incidents of misconduct, abuse, or inappropriate behavior as well as protect faithful servants in their service to Christ's church. While no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Minor Protection Policy and Procedures Manual (hereafter called: MPM) reflects South CLT Pres's commitment to help protect minors from harm.

General Principle
The general principle that undergirds this policy is the knowledge that the risk of abuse increases when certain factors are at play, including a minor being isolated with an adult, lack of proper screening and accountability among leadership, ignorance of the risks of abuse, and neglect of specific procedures that safeguard minors.

Church Leadership
All those who hold a position of authority in the church, whether they work directly with minors or not, will be screened and required to have a criminal background check. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization. All leaders must read, sign, agree to, and enforce the rules of the MPM.

Definitions
For purposes of this policy, the terms "child", "children", "youth," and "minor" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" is any adult or minor (paid or volunteer) who works with children. The terms "employee" and "staff" include all paid members of the ministry.

Approval of Workers With Our Children
All employees and all persons who desire to work with minors participating in the programs and activities of South CLT Pres will be trained in our policies and procedures and screened in accordance with this guidance. They will normally be parents, church members or regular attendees. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**
A person will be considered for any position working with minors only after having attended South CLT Pres regularly for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with minors. Any rare exception must be made by the Session and a Policy Exception Request Form will be completed.

b) **Written Application**
All persons seeking to work with minors must complete and sign a written application on a form to be supplied by South CLT Pres. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with minors, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions.

c) **Training**
All workers will be required to complete an online training program provided by MinistrySafe, be tested, and earn a Certificate of Completion. Additionally, workers must read the MPM and sign the Manual Acknowledgement Form. The church shall keep a digital record of all who have been trained along with copies of the appropriate completed forms.

d) **Personal Interview**
Upon completion of the application, a personal interview with the Director of Children's Ministry and/or the Youth Director will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

e) **Reference Checks**
Before an applicant is permitted to work with minors, a call will be made to the administrative offices of that applicant's previous two churches as a basic character reference, unless the applicant has been a regular attender at only one church in the past five (5) years, in which case a call will most likely only be made to that one church. All findings and correspondence about the references will be documented and kept on file at the church.

f) **Screening/Background Check**
All paid and volunteer workers will be screened through a national criminal investigation for past child abuse convictions or expungements. Background checks will be performed after the initial interview as per NC state law.

h) **Disqualified for Service**
When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. No individual, whether serving as a volunteer or a compensated worker, who has been convicted of a sex crime or a violent crime will provide services in any ministry-sponsored activity or program for children or youth. Individuals will be notified by pastoral staff and/or Session, personally and pastorally. If individuals are disqualified, see item # 12: Known Sex Offenders.

Application Process

1) Any adult working with minors must be screened and trained. The requirements are as follows:
    a. Has acknowledged receipt of, and vows adherence to, MPM.
    b. Has completed the MinistrySafe training, passed the MinistrySafe test, and earned a Certificate of Completion.
    c. Has completed an application form and an interview with the Children's Ministry or Youth Director.
    d. Has successfully completed a background check ordered by South CLT Pres.
    e. Childcare workers must be at least 12 years old unless an exception is approved by the Director of Children's Ministry or Youth Director. If an exception is made, the Parental Affirmation and Consent for Minor (Teenage) Volunteers form is required to be completed prior to approval to work with minors.

2) All records of the application process are considered confidential and shall be kept digitally. These shall include applications, evaluations, background checks, and any reporting records. The children's ministry director, children's ministry assistant director, youth director and session will have access to the confidential information.

Minor Protection Policies

1) **Window Policy:** Children and youth ministries shall take place in rooms that have windows in the doors, in public places, or in the main gathering areas of homes (e.g., living room, backyard). Doors shall never be locked while persons are inside the room. If exceptions need to be made, Policy Exception Request Form must be filled out and approved (e.g., life group).

2) **Kids5:29 (Children's Ministry) Policy:** Two workers who are not married or related to one another must be present before children can be admitted into the children's ministry room. If another worker is not present, the Director of Children's Ministry or Assistant Director will be called in to help with the situation. If two workers are married or related, an unrelated worker must be present. At least one worker must be 21 years old. Class adult to child ratios are one adult to four children. This will also be posted in the children's ministry room. Children's workers will be given a printed name badge upon starting their shift and are required to wear their badge for the duration of Kids 5:29. Workers in the classrooms should not consume hot beverages without lids. Workers are prohibited from bringing food into a classroom. Exceptions would be infant formula, breast milk or allergen friendly food.

3) The workers in the children's ministry are to follow the Children's Ministry Handbook in addition to the procedures stated here.

    a. **Check-in/Check-out**
    Parents or guardians may check in and designate who may pick the child up. A printed ID sticker for the child and corresponding receipt for the parent/guardian is printed for each child at check-in and placed immediately on the child. Request that the parent or guardian put their phone on vibrate and if they are needed, they will be called. For check-out, sticker ID must be used to pick up the child. If the parent/guardian loses their sticker, they must provide a photo ID before releasing the child. The child must not be released to anyone other than the parent or guardian or person approved for pick-up. Siblings under 18 are not approved to pick-up their siblings from the children's ministry to ensure children do not get separated from a sibling on the way to find their parents.

    b. Diaper Changing
    Workers must encourage parents/guardians to send their child in with a dry diaper prior to children's ministry commencing. Only female workers shall change diapers, unless the child belongs to the parent/legal guardian. Diapers will be changed in full view of another children's staff member. Workers changing diapers must always wear protective gloves when changing diapers or applying lotion or powder to the child. If the child soils their clothes and needs to be changed into new clothes, the parent/guardian will be called to change the child's clothes.

    c. Evacuation Emergency
    Once all children are signed into the system, a headcount will be taken by the workers. If there is a fire in the building or a need to immediately evacuate, children will be counted. Once all children are accounted for, they will be immediately taken out of the exit located to the right after exiting the Kids5:29 room. Parents/guardians will be able to retrieve their children outside using their receipt or photo ID. Child(ren) will not be released to parents/guardians until everyone is safely outside the building.

4) **Kids5:29 Restroom Policy:** Workers must encourage parents/guardians to take their child(ren) to the bathroom prior to children's ministry commencing. Children shall be taken to the restroom in groups, if possible. Two adults should check to make sure the bathroom is safe and then wait outside the stall for the child(ren). If two adults are not available, the parent/guardian needs to be texted to take their child(ren). If a child is very young and needs assistance using the restroom, the worker will leave the stall door partially open, and make sure another adult is nearby. A worker must never touch the private areas of a minor except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper, or helping a child in the bathroom who cannot wipe themself.

5) **Physical Contact Policy**: South CLT Pres staff and workers will use thoughtful discretion regarding physical contact with minors under their supervision. Care will be taken to avoid any contact that could be bothersome, inappropriate or construed to be inappropriate or misunderstood by the child or others observing the contact. Examples of inappropriate contact would be any touching of private body parts, kissing, or extended holding. This would not include holding infants, rocking a young child, changing a diaper, or holding a child when upset, and is not intended to prevent the appropriate comforting of a child or the normal care of young children. Holding and comforting children will be preferably done by females. However, outside of those circumstances, South CLT Pres staff and workers will not initiate physical contact with minors (e.g., asking minors for hugs). Piggyback rides, wrestling, and sitting the child on the lap of a male is forbidden. Workers will also be aware that abuse does occur on a peer-to-peer and sibling level and will discourage behavior among peers that may be bothersome or construed to be inappropriate.

6) **Vehicle Safety**:[1] While it is the intent of the church to abide by the statement "a ministry worker shall never be alone in a vehicle with a minor not related to or his or her own", this can be waived by the permission of the parent/legal guardian. Permission must be communicated directly by the parent/legal guardian to the ministry worker, preferably in writing. Permission from the parent/legal guardian must be asked for and granted each and every time as consent cannot be assumed due to prior approval.

7) **Communication and Social Media**: Communication with minors can be done through official church email, phone calls and text messages.
    a. Communication is only allowed during the hours of 7AM to 10PM.
    b. If the staff or volunteer receives or initiates a one-on-one text message from or to a minor, the staff or volunteer must follow the "3 text rule". This means the staff or volunteer may respond two times (with short texts), and by the third response, a third party must be added, such as another staff, volunteer, or parent. Otherwise the conversation should be discontinued, unless it is a meeting coordination type of messaging.
    c. If communication from a minor is initiated through social media, the conversation must be switched to one of the options listed above, still following the "3 text rule".
    d. Phone calls more than meeting coordination and longer than 3 minutes should be either recorded or moved to in-person. Once recording, all parties involved must be notified.

8) **Definitions of Child Abuse**: 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:
    a. Physical abuse – any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental (or is suspected by a worker to be due to gross negligence).

[1] Permission should be granted every time. A text message to and from the parent is considered sufficient written documentation.

b. Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
c. Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between a minor and another minor, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and viewing pornography.
d. Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.
e. See appendix for indicators of abuse.

9) **Recognition of Grooming**: Staff and workers who interact with minors should also be sensitive particularly to anyone trying to isolate themselves with a minor or "grooming" a minor for inappropriate behavior at church related activities. Grooming behavior includes, but is not limited to, attempting to isolate a person, being overly attentive beyond what is appropriate, gift giving, offering special privileges, boundary-breaking, using sexually inappropriate language, unnecessary touching, etc. Any behavior suspected to be grooming should be reported to one of the pastors unless either is alleged to be involved. The pastors will contact the parents/guardians of the minor regarding the alleged behavior and the incident(s) will be documented on the Minor Safety Incident Report Form.

10) **Reporting a Disclosure of Abuse or Suspicion of Abuse**: Directions on how to report abuse will be posted in the Kids 5:29 room (see appendix). If during a conversation with a South CLT Pres staff or worker, a minor reports that physical, emotional, or sexual abuse has been done to him/her, or if anyone has reason to suspect a minor has been or is being physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, the following will occur:
    a. A report must be made to the Director of Children's Ministry or Youth Director and/or one of the pastors. A Minor Safety Incident Report Form will be completed as soon as possible by the individual who was made aware of the alleged abuse and contain as much detail as possible.
    b. Within 24 hours, the local police #704-336-3030 *and* the county Department of Social Services (Child Protective Services Hotline #980-314-3577) must be contacted by the individual who was made aware of the alleged abuse. All South CLT Pres staff and child/youth workers are "mandatory reporters", obligated by the laws of North Carolina to report suspected neglect or abuse of a minor. South CLT Pres will abide by the government laws regarding child abuse reports. Non-workers who are not mandated by law should still report as we have a moral obligation to protect the vulnerable (Proverbs 31:8-9).
    c. There will be written documentation of all the steps taken by South CLT Pres on the same Minor Safety Incident Report Form and kept digitally.
    d. If the offender is a minor, the church will consult a lawyer to determine the best course of action in order to 1) protect the children that the minor would come into contact with at church-sponsored functions and 2) to make the parents of those children aware of the situation.
    e. When providing care to the alleged victim, while the investigation is on-going, do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation. Do not be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegations which could contaminate an official investigation. Rather, suspend judgment until the investigation concludes.

11) **Responding to Allegations of Abuse at Church-Related Functions:** In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of South CLT Pres or during church-sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be implemented by a member of the Session unless he is alleged to be involved.

a. We will report the abuse within 24 hours to both the police #704-336-3030 *and* the county Department of Social Services #980-314-3577, complying with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
b. A Minor Safety Incident Report will be completed by the individual who was made aware of the alleged abuse.
c. The parent or legal guardian of the minor will be notified.
d. The Session will be informed.
e. Anyone accused of or suspected of abusing a minor will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until an investigation by the authorities is concluded. Suspected abusers may attend services and church events online or in-person pending the completion of an investigation by the authorities and the Session. If the suspected individual attends worship or church related activities in person he or she will be accompanied by an officer of the church. This is in order to create geographical space and to stop any and all interaction between the accused and the accuser while the investigation is ongoing.
f. If a member admits to abusing a minor, he/she will be judged ecclesiastically according to Cases without Process in the Book of Church Order chapter 38. If a member is convicted of abusing a minor, he/she will be judged ecclesiastically according to Cases with Process in the Book of Church Order chapters 31-34. If a non-member admits to abusing a minor, while he/she cannot be subject to the eccesiastical discipline process because they are not a member, the Session will seek to handle the individual(s) in the manner of the Book of Church Order chapter 27.
g. If a member or non-member is accused and the civil authorities conclude their investigation finding guilt or no guilt, the church reserves the right to institute process based on Book of Church Order chapter 31-2.
h. For those bringing allegations, who so desire, visits will be arranged and a trauma-informed[2] support person will be assigned to provide encouragement and practical care (e.g., accompanying the victim to file a police report or court hearings, arranging babysitting so the victim can attend court hearings, etc.). The support person will not offer any therapeutic, legal, or other expert advice, but will instead function as a helper and a reminder that the church unequivocally supports the victim and is here to provide on-going support, as needed.
i. The church will seek legal counsel.
j. Any congregational or external communication regarding cases of abuse, will be overseen by the Session and handled in accordance with the Book of Church Order.[3]
k. At the earliest possibility the congregation will be made aware of the allegation(s)[4] in a clear, factual explanation, protecting the victim's identity(ies). Congregants will be encouraged to contact the authorities directly with any pertinent information. Additionally, congregants will be invited to confidentially share relevant information with the Session so that they can take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the congregation.
l. Subsequent allegations of minor abuse that took place on church property or during a church-related function will be treated as a new disclosure and will be handled in accordance with section 10 and 11.
m. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.

[2] "Trauma informed" means understanding, anticipating, and responding to the issues, expectations, and special needs that a person who has been victimized may have.

[3] Best practices will recommend a designated person to be the spokesman to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The victim's identities would be protected.

[4] An allegation assumes that the Session has been notified, the minor incident report form has been filled out and submitted, parents have been notified, authorities have been contacted, and the church has engaged legal counsel on the matter.

n. The situation will be investigated by civil authorities. The Session will cooperate with civil authorities and will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.
o. If needed, and in the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, an outside organization will be called in by the Session, in agreement with the alleged victim(s), to perform an objective, independent third party investigation to ascertain facts using trauma-informed practices and to determine next steps.
p. Any person who is not found innocent[5] of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children.
q. The congregation will be informed of the process as well as the results of the investigation.
r. The Session, children's ministry staff, and youth director will determine what further training and policies should be implemented, if needed.
s. Periodic training will be given on prevention of child abuse and identifying known or suspected child abuse.

The leadership will address allegations of abuse using best trauma-informed practices while pursuing its highest goal: "the glory of God" (BCO 27.3). The leadership will also pursue the good of the victim(s), "the purity of God's Church and the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners" (BCO 27.3). They will ensure safety and respect the agency of the victim(s); communicate updates with the victim(s) consistently and clearly with trauma-informed language; commit to not downplaying or silencing those bringing allegations; and move as quickly as possible to handle the situation with integrity. If the allegations are proven true they will admit that abuse occurred within the church; recognize the damage done and offer a direct and public apology; fund appropriate medical/counseling needs; and improve abuse prevention practices accordingly.

12) **Known Sex Offenders:** When any member of the leadership is informed that a registered sex offender is attending church, the following will occur:
    a. We will obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions by conducting a national criminal records check using a top quality and most thorough record checking system, understanding that many offenders often agree to a plea deal that may lessen the charges.
    b. Based on the criminal record, legal counsel, and insurance coverage, the Session will determine if the church is able to include the sex offender while adequately protecting the congregation.
    c. If the sex offender is on probation, we will identify his/her probation officer and ascertain in writing the specific conditions of his/her probation and whether or not he/she is able to attend church with children present. If it is discovered that the sex offender has been dishonest about his crimes or conditions of probation, his privilege to attend church may be revoked pending a collaboration of the Session with the civil authorities.
    d. If the offender's criminal history warrants the need for accountability in the form of a chaperone at all times and limited access to avoid close proximity to minors, the Session will inform the congregation of the sex offender's public criminal background, what accountability is being offered, including what safety measures will be put in place, what restrictions apply to the offender, and how to report an infraction to leadership. It will be explained to the congregation that the accountability offered is not only for ensuring safety, but also for the purpose of shepherding the offender.
    e. If the offender is unwilling to abide by the accountability rules or becomes no longer welcome to attend church, the Session will inform the congregation of the circumstances for safety precautions.

[5] "Not found innocent" applies when results of any investigation are inconclusive yet guilt is still strongly presumed.

f. If the offender is a minor, the church will consult a lawyer to determine the best course of action in order to 1) protect the children that the minor would come into contact with at church-sponsored functions and 2) to make the parents of those children aware of the situation.
g. The sex offender's inclusion in church-related functions will be conditional upon signing a Contingent Participation Agreement, provided by the insurance company, that requires the sex offender not work with minors in any capacity, transport minors, attend events for minors unless his/her own children are involved, and always be in the presence of a chaperone designated by the church. The conditional attendance agreement option will not be available unless the church's insurer is informed and confirms that coverage will not be affected.
h. A single violation could result in the immediate termination of the sex offender's privilege to attend church pending a collaboration of the Session with the civil authorities.
i. In some cases, exclusion of the offender from church is the only viable option. This option is advisable if 1) for any reason the conditional attendance option is not feasible or enforceable; or 2) if the offender's crimes are so frequent or heinous that exclusion is the only appropriate option; or 3) one or more of the offender's victims attends the church.

13) **Teenage Workers**: We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for workers who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. Such workers, even those who are 12 years of age, for the purposes of this document shall be termed "teenage workers". The following guidelines apply:
    a. Teenage workers will be screened and trained as specified above, except for background checks as background checks may not reveal a juvenile record.
    b. Teenage workers will be asked if they have a juvenile record including violence or sexual assault.
    c. A parent must complete the Parental Affirmation and Consent for Minor (Teenage) Volunteer Form prior to the minor volunteering, confirming the information provided by the teenage worker.
    d. No individual who has been convicted of a crime against a minor or a violent crime will provide services in any ministry-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
    e. Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult.

14) **Discipline Policy**: It is the policy of South CLT Pres not to administer corporal punishment with children, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, shaking, or other physical discipline of children. If a minor is in need of correction or assistance, the following applies:
    a. If a child has lost control and is a danger to others, the worker should move the other children away from that child and call the parent/guardian or Director of Children's Ministry if the parent is not responding.
    b. Verbally redirect the child using a calm, kind tone. If necessary, designate a time-out area for the child and remind the child that they are welcome to rejoin the group when they are ready to obey.
    c. If a minor touches the worker inappropriately, the worker should remain calm, tell the minor to "please keep your hands to yourself" and notify the Director of Children's Ministry. Parents/legal guardians will be notified and a Minor Safety Incident Report Form will be completed.

15) **Illness and Accidental Injuries to Minors**: In the event that a minor is ill or injured while under our care, the following steps shall be followed:
    a. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
    b. Participants should be returned to their parents/guardians as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent/guardian.
    c. Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
    d. For minor bumps, scrapes, and bruises, workers on duty will provide First Aid (antiseptic, Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate. Workers will notify the child's parents/guardians of the injury at time of pick up, if the child is consolable. With an inconsolable child, we will notify the parents/guardians immediately.
    e. For accidental injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parents/guardians will immediately be summoned in addition to a Children's Ministry staff member. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
    f. Once the minor has received appropriate medical attention, a Notice of Injury Form will be completed and the report will be delivered to the Director of Children's Ministry or the Youth Director.
    g. If the injury is deemed to be the result of abuse, refer to item #11: Responding to Allegations of Abuse at Church-Related Functions above.

16) **Leaves of Absence:** A worker or paid staff who has been absent from regular attendance from Church activities for over two years will be required to re-qualify (including training and background check) prior to serving.

17) **Conformance**: Conformance to these policies by workers or paid staff is not optional.

18) **Gift Giving**: Staff and volunteers are not permitted to give gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parents/guardians.

19) **Meetings:** Youth leaders and volunteers will not meet one-to-one to provide counsel with a minor outside of large or small group gatherings without the written or electronic permission of a parent/legal guardian. Parental consent must be given each and every time. One-to-one meetings must occur in a public place or in the home with a parent present and be between individuals of the same gender.

20) **Minors**: Minors will not be able to participate in any event that requires a permission slip without a written release.

21) **Violation of Policy or Procedures:** Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

22) **Policy Exceptions and Necessary Deviations**: If there is a situation where the policy cannot be followed as stated, a worker must complete a Policy Exception Request Form and submit it to the appropriate director prior to the planned event. If the policy was not followed due to extenuating circumstances, the Necessary Deviation from Policy Form must be completed and submitted to the appropriate director.

Appendix

Indicators of Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment: The majority of minors who are sexually abused will be moderately to severely symptomatic at some point in their life. Because church workers have ongoing contact with the entire family unit and its acquaintances, and as such may be in the unique position to detect various forms of abuse or maltreatment, workers need to be aware of indicators of child abuse and maltreatment.

A. Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a minor has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain, or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted disease
- Pregnancy

B. It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors and therefore should warrant concern:

- Placing mouth on a sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Making sexual sounds

C. Emotional or behavioral signs of child abuse may include:

- Depression
- Lack of attachment to a caregiver, displaying distrust or wariness at the approach of adults, caregivers, or specific people; fear of going home
- Being constantly watchful as if something bad is going to happen
- Sudden changes in behavior
- Aggressive, destructive, outbursts of anger, running away from home
- Self-injury
- Delays in emotional, cognitive, physical, or academic development
- Being inappropriately adult or infantile
- Bed-wetting in children who have previously outgrown it, nightmares, difficulty sleeping
- High anxiety, chronic stomach pains, or headaches
- Frequent unexplained absences from school

D. Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns), especially if child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the injury
- Injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the body, as accidental injuries typically occur on one side of the body

E. Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is consistently dirty or has a bad odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs
- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs

Understanding abuse disclosures and how to properly respond: When minors disclose abuse, they almost always do so tentatively or by accident, and may later recant even when there is proof that the abuse occurred. If questioned directly, many child victims may deny the abuse. When a minor discloses intentionally, the minor may first test the adult's reaction by pretending that the abuse happened to a friend or by supplying only a small bit of information. If a child discloses abuse to you, the following are helpful tips on how to respond in the moment:

- Stay calm.
- Show love and respect for the minor.
- Thank the minor for telling you and praise the minor's courage.
- If the minor expresses guilt or concerns about getting in trouble, reassure the minor that no matter what happened, he or she is not to blame.
- If the minor expresses concerns about not being believed, reassure the minor that you believe him or her.
- Allow the minor to talk freely; do not interrupt, ask the minor to repeat words, or probe for details. Use open-ended questions such as "What happened next?" or "Would you like to tell me more?"
- Do not offer false assurances, such as promising to keep the minor's disclosure a secret.
- Let the minor know what to expect next and incorporate their input where possible.
- Protect the minor immediately from the suspected offender.
- Report the abuse to authorities and your supervisor/church leaders.
- Document the disclosure and your report.
- Protect the minor's right to privacy and avoid the urge to turn indiscriminately to colleagues, friends, or family for advice. Instead turn to professionals experienced in handling cases of child sexual abuse and to carefully selected individuals who can provide assistance and support to the minor and you.

Sources Consulted

Sources consulted for the drafting of this policy were…

- other PCA churches child protection policies
- Brotherhood Mutual: Child Protection in a Ministry Environment Guidelines for Ministry Workers
- The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Church and Ministries by GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in a Christian Environment) recommended by the PCA Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault committee
- On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church by Deepak Reju
- GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in a Christian Environment) website at www.netgrace.org.
- Those affiliated with GRACE such as Diane Langberg and Jimmy Hinton.
- the Bible
- PCA Book of Church Order

NORTH CAROLINA DUTY TO REPORT ABUSE LAW

§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-123, s. 3, effective January 1, 2016. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 2; 1993, c. 516, s. 4; 1997-506, s. 32; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 3; 2013-52, s. 7; 2015-123, s. 3.)

Minor Protection Policies and Procedures
Manual Acknowledgment Form

My signature acknowledges that I have read and understand South Charlotte Presbyterian Church's Minor Protection Policy and Procedures Manual and Appendix. I agree to:

- follow the policies and procedures explained in the manual ____ (initial)
- nurture and protect children and never engage in behavior that will harm them ____ (initial)
- report known or suspected abuse of minors to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with the mandatory reporting laws of North Carolina ____ (initial)

_____
DATE

_____
PRINT NAME

_____
PRINT SIGNATURE

Child/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application Form

It is the goal of this church to create a safe and secure environment for all minors and workers who are involved in church activities. To facilitate this emphasis, it is necessary to gather pertinent information from those who desire employment or offer volunteer services to our children and youth programs. This information will be used for the sole purpose of helping the church provide a safe and secure environment for minors and workers.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Date of birth: _____

Specific ministry or department: Children ____ Youth ____

Have you ever used name(s) other than the one above? If yes, please list:

_____

Current street address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Years at address: _____

Previous address: _____

Current phone number (Home): _____ (Work): _____

Please respond to all questions below that apply to the position for which you are applying/volunteering.

Position applying/volunteering for: _____

When are you available to work? _____

Do you have a valid driver's license? _____ Commercial license? _____

License number: _____ State issued: _____

Current employer: _____ Length of employment: _____

Name of supervisor: _____ Phone number: _____

Previous employers (within last five years):

Employer: _____ Dates employed: _____

Employer: _____ Dates employed: _____

Employer: _____ Dates employed: _____

Is there any reason you should NOT work with or around children or youth? _____

If yes, explain: _____

Have you ever been accused of hurting a child, and/or arrested for, charged or are currently under probation for, or convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of a minor or adult? _____

If yes, explain: _____

If you're a teenager, have you ever been suspended or expelled from school? ____

If so, when and for what reason? _____

Please provide the following church information:

What, if any, church affiliation do you have? _____

How long have you attended that church? _____ Are you an official member? _____

List other churches with which you have been affiliated and the dates attended:

Church: _____ Phone: _____ Dates _____

Church: _____ Phone: _____ Dates _____

Have you ever worked with youth or children? _____ List where and in what capacity:

_____

_____

Please list two character references other than family (must know person longer than 1 year):

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Years known: ___

Address: _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Years known: ___

Address: _____

What is your relationship to this person? _____

I hereby authorize South Charlotte Presbyterian Church (South CLT Pres) and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information, which may be material to my qualifications as a volunteer or for employment now, and if applicable, during the tenure of my volunteering or employment with South CLT Pres. I release South CLT Pres and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

I understand that by North Carolina law, church workers are "mandatory reporters" and if I suspect abuse of a minor, I am bound by the law to report my suspicions to police and the county Department of Social Services.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PARENTAL AFFIRMATION AND CONSENT
FOR MINOR (TEENAGE) VOLUNTEER

This document must be signed by the parent/legal guardian of the teenager (minor) applying for a ministry worker position.

I, _____ (print name) affirm that I am the parent/legal guardian of the applicant. I recognize that South Charlotte Presbyterian Church is relying on the accuracy of the information provided.

I understand that in order for my child to be a children's ministry volunteer, they must watch a Sexual Abuse Awareness Training video through Ministry Safe. (It may be helpful for the parent/legal guardian to watch the training video with your child).

To the best of my knowledge, I affirm and attest that the information provided on my child's application is true and correct. I further attest and affirm that I am aware of no traits or tendencies of _____ (applicant's name) that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SOUTH CLT PRES
CHURCH

INTERVIEW FORM

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY WORKERS

Volunteer Applicant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Volunteer Position: _____ Interviewer's Name/Title: _____

1. In what ways would you like to participate in children/youth ministry in this church? Why?

2. When did you first become interested in this work?

3. What experience/training do you have? Do you volunteer with children outside of church with/without your own kids?

4. Do you believe the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God?

5. Describe your own faith journey (your testimony). Are you willing to share your faith?

6. Do you understand and agree to the content in the South CLT Pres Minor Protection Policies and Procedures and Appendix?

7. Interviewer: Give a few scenarios and ask the interviewee how he/she would respond based on the policy.

Kids 5:29 sample questions:

1) You are the first to arrive at Kids 5:29 and parents are trying to check in their children and leave. However, you are the only one there. What do you do?

2) A four year old who was normally happy and talkative becomes withdrawn over time. You notice that she doesn't like to sit down because she says "it hurts," and she now gets scared at pick-up. One day, she describes to you sexually abusive behavior by her father who is a member. What do you do?

Youth Group sample questions:

1) A minor of the opposite sex tells you after youth group that he/she is really depressed after breaking up with his/her significant other. He/she asks if you can drive them home and counsel them during the 30 minute drive. What do you do?

2) A minor confides in you that the other youth group leader has been touching them sexually after youth group ends and forwards you lewd text messages sent by that youth leader. What do you do

_____

Signature (Applicant)

_____

Signature (Interviewer)

Interviewer recommends? ___ Yes ___ No
Comments:

SOUTH CLT PRES CHURCH

REFERENCE RESPONSE INFORMATION

To: _____ From: _____

Name of Applicant: _____

The individual named above has expressed an interest in working with children or youth in our ministry. The candidate has listed you as a reference. In order for our organization to properly evaluate the qualifications of this candidate, we're asking you to complete this **confidential** form with your honest opinions and impressions of the candidate. The candidate will not read your response. **Please return the completed form in the enclosed envelope, or email back to children@southcltpres.org.**

1. How long have you known the ministry worker candidate? _____

2. In what capacity have you come to know this individual (e.g., coworker, neighbor, friend, etc.)? _____
_____

3. In your opinion, is the above worker candidate fully qualified to work with children and youth? Yes or No
If no, please explain. _____
_____
_____

4. What concerns, if any, would you have in allowing this individual to work with children or youth? _____
_____
_____

5. Are you aware of anything in the candidate's background, personality, or behavior that could in any way pose a threat to children or youth? Yes or No. If no, please explain. _____
_____

Additional comments or explanations: _____

I state that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form at your earliest convenience to:
South Charlotte Presbyterian Church P.O. Box 49324 Charlotte, NC 28277

NOTICE OF INJURY FORM

Organization: South Charlotte Presbyterian Church (P.O. Box 49324 Charlotte, NC 28277)

Date of injury: _____ Time of injury: _____ AM or PM

Where did the injury occur: _____

Name of person injured: _____ Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s), if minor: _____

Injuries sustained: _____

Where was injured taken (hospital/doctor): _____

Relationship to organization: __ Member __ Visitor __Volunteer __ Employee __ Other

If injury occurred on insured premises, for what reason was the injured on the premises? _____

_____

Who was responsible for supervision at the time of the injury? _____

If injury occurred elsewhere, what connection did it have with the insured's operations or activities? _____

_____

Does the injured party have personal medical insurance that could apply? Yes No

Name of medical insurance company: _____

Full description of the incident: _____

_____

_____

Witness of Event

Name: _____ Name: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Completed by (Name/Title): _____ **Date:** _____

MINOR SAFETY INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form should be used to report any violation of the Minor Protection Policy, boundary violations, disclosures of abuse, child safety concerns, or other behavior or allegations of behavior that might jeopardize the safety of a child. Proof or direct knowledge of a behavior or incident is not necessary to submit this form, and as such some lines on this form may not be applicable to you. Provide whatever information you do have, and where extra space is needed, please continue below the line or attach an additional sheet.

PRIVACY DISCLAIMER: This form should not be shared with co-workers or other volunteers. Submit this form to your immediate supervisor, law enforcement, or other reporting agency.

MANDATORY REPORTING: NC mandatory reporting laws state that this information must be reported to local authorities. Information in this document will be reported within 24 hours to local authorities (police: 704-336-3030 and Mecklenburg Child Protective Services: 980-314-3577 or 911 for emergencies). All subsequent information should be kept with this form.

Organization: South Charlotte Presbyterian Church (P.O. Box 49324 Charlotte, NC 28277)

1. Date(s) of incident/behavior, if known:

   _____

2. Name(s) and contact information of minor(s) harmed, potentially harmed, or otherwise adversely impacted by incident/behavior:

   __ Unknown __ Known (*fill out lines below*)

   Minor 1: _____ Age: ___

   Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s): _____

   Email: _____ Phone:_____

   Minor 2: _____ Age: ___

   Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s): _____

   Email: _____ Phone:_____

3. Name(s) and contact information of individual(s)—adult or minor—who accidentally or intentionally violated the Policy, or otherwise harmed or potentially harmed (the above) minor(s), or otherwise engaged in concerning behavior.

   __ Unknown __ Known (*fill out lines below*)

Individual 1: _____ Age: ____

Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s): _____

Email: _____ Phone:_____

Individual 2: _____ Age: ____

Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s): _____

Email: _____ Phone:_____

4. What Policy, if any, was violated?

   _____

5. Where did the incident/behavior occur?

   _____

6. Was there an ongoing activity at the time of the incident? If so, what?

   _____

   _____

7. Description of incident/behavior:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Did you witness the concerning incident/behavior firsthand? __ Yes __ No

   If not, how did you find out about it?

   _____

   _____

9. Who was present at the time of the incident/behavior?

   Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

   Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

10. Which individual(s), other than those listed above, know about the incident? Please include individuals in the church and beyond.

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

    Name: _____ Role in church/Relationship to minor: _____

11. Please provide the following information for any law enforcement or child protection agencies that were contacted in reference to this incident:

    Name of Agency 1: _____

    Date(s) of contact: _____

    Means of communicating with agency: _____ Report #: _____

    Name(s) of individual(s) who contacted the agency:

    _____

    _____

    Name(s) of other individual(s) present when agency was contacted:

    _____

    _____

    Name of Agency 2: _____

    Date(s) of contact: _____

    Means of communicating with agency: _____ Report #: _____

    Name(s) of individual(s) who contacted the agency:

    _____

    Name(s) of other individual(s) present when agency was contacted:

    _____

12. Were any child protection protection professionals or experts, other than those listed above, contacted about this incident? If yes, please indicate the individual(s) or non-governmental agency contacted, the date of the contact, and the result of the consult:

    Date(s): _____ Consult: _____

    Result: _____

    Date(s): _____ Consult: _____

    Result: _____

13. What additional steps have been, or will be, taken to respond to this incident/violation (e.g., other consultations sought, consequences for the actor(s), support for the impacted minor(s), community notification)?

    (Anticipated) Date(s): _____

    Result: _____

    (Anticipated) Date(s): _____

    Result: _____

    (Anticipated) Date(s): _____

    Result: _____

14. What, if anything, can be done to prevent future similar incidents/violations or improve response procedures?

    _____

    _____

15. Individual submitting this report:

    Print Name: _____

    Signature: _____ Date: _____

Report submitted internally to (name): _____ Title: _____

Date/Time: _____ Phone: _____

Signature: _____

SOUTH CLT PRES
CHURCH

ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Event name: _____

Date(s) and location of activity: _____

Name of participant _____

Name of parents/guardians: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name of emergency contact: _____

Phone (daytime): _____ Phone (evening): _____

List allergies or medical conditions: _____

Is the sponsor authorized to approve medical treatment? Yes No

Is the participant covered by personal/family medical insurance? Yes No

If yes, name of insurer: _____ Policy or group number: _____

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that participation in the activity described above involves risk to the participant (and to the participant's parents or guardians, if the participant is a minor), and may result in various types of injury including, but not limited to, the following: sickness, bodily injury, death, emotional injury, personal injury, property damage, and financial damage. In consideration for the opportunity to participate in the activity described above (the "activity"), the participant (or parent/guardian if the participant is a minor) acknowledges and accepts the risks of injury associated with participation in and transportation to and from the activity. The participant (or parent/guardian) accepts personal financial responsibility for any injury or other loss sustained during the activity or during transportation to and from the activity, as well as for any medical treatment rendered to the participant that is authorized by the sponsor or its agents, employees, volunteers, or any other representatives (collectively referred to as the "activity sponsor"). Further, the participant (or parent/guardian) releases and promises to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the activity sponsor for any injury arising directly or indirectly out of the described activity or transportation to and from the activity, whether such injury arises out of the negligence of the activity sponsor, the participant, or otherwise. If a dispute over this agreement or any claim for damages arises, the participant (or parent/guardian) agrees to resolve the matter through a mutually acceptable alternative dispute resolution process. If the participant (or parent/guardian) and the activity sponsor cannot agree upon such a process, the dispute will be submitted to a three-member arbitration panel for resolution in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SOUTH CLT PRES CHURCH

POLICY EXCEPTION REQUEST FORM

Submitted by:_____

Full Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Relevant Policy Section: _____

Relevant Policy Language:

_____

_____

Exception Requested:

_____

_____

Please explain why this exception is necessary.

_____

_____

Is this request ongoing or time-limited? If time-limited, please list relevant date(s) below.

___ Ongoing ___ Time limited

Request is for the following date(s)/program(s):

_____

_____

Permission received from (staff): _____ on (date) _____

Requester Signature: _____ Date: _____

Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

NOTIFICATION FORM: NECESSARY DEVIATION FROM POLICY

Submitted by: _____

Full Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Position (if applicable): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Relevant Policy Section: _____

Relevant Policy Language:

_____

_____

Please list any Policy deviations and explain the circumstances that necessitated these deviations.

_____

_____

What date did this occur? _____

Who else was present when this occurred?

_____

_____

Did anyone specifically object to the deviation? If so, please list their names below:

_____

_____

Please share anything else you feel is important.

_____

_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE

1) Complete a Minor Safety Incident Report Form as soon as possible with as much detail as possible. Form is located in the handbook binder in the nursery.

2) Contact Sarah Groelsema **(sarahg@southcltpres.org)**, Director of Children's Ministry or Jim Hahn **(jimh@southcltpres.org)**, Director of Youth as soon as possible. Then, submit the Minor Safety Incident Report Form to them.

3) The Director of Children's Ministry or Youth Director will make sure the local police dept. **(704) 336-3030** and Mecklenburg County Dept. of Social Services **(980) 314-3577** are contacted within 24 hours of learning of the suspected abuse.

4) Any worker suspected of sexual abuse will immediately be relieved of his/her duties pending the completion of an investigation by local authorities.

All reports of suspected abuse will be treated seriously. South Charlotte Presbyterian Church will cooperate fully with civil authorities and will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.

Post in Prominent Place