

# FAIRMOUNT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## PURPOSE

It is Our<sup>i</sup> responsibility to guard and protect the members of Our community who participate in Our ministries. The State of Ohio Rev. Code 2151.42.1(A)(1)(b) requires certain individuals, including persons entering spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion, to report suspected Abuse. Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421(4)(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii) requires the same from clerics and church staff. These legal requirements and Our moral duty as Christians require us to report signs of suspected Abuse<sup>ii</sup> we observe in Minors<sup>iii</sup>. The purpose of the Child Protection Policy is:

- **Safeguard** -- Our Young Children<sup>iv</sup>, Elementary Children<sup>v</sup> and Youth<sup>vi</sup> from Abuse and to make Our church a safe and caring place;
- **Strengthen**-- Our Christian education ministries with Young Children, Elementary Children and Youth.
- **Define** -- for Our staff and members Our responsibility to report suspected Abuse;
- **Respond** -- to allegations in a prompt, fair and compassionate manner;
- **Protect** -- Our church staff and volunteers from potential false allegations of committing Abuse;
- **Limit** -- the extent of Our legal risk and liability; and

## CODE OF PRACTICE

This policy covers activities -- on-site or off-site -- Sponsored<sup>vii</sup> by Fairmount Presbyterian Church. Outside groups using our facilities will be provided this document and are expected to follow it.

## DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION PERSON (DCPP)<sup>viii</sup>

Fairmount Presbyterian Church has designated the Head Pastor as the DCPP responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of Minors (the term Child in this acronym DCPP refers to all Minors). The role of the DCPP is to:

1. know which outside Child Protection Agency to contact in the event of a concern and communicate with local social services, national services (NSPCC)<sup>ix</sup> and other agencies, as appropriate;
2. provide information, identify and implement Child protection training needs;
3. ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover;
4. keep relevant people informed about any action taken and further action required; for example, disciplinary action against a member of staff;
5. ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken, and that this is kept safely and in confidence

All contact with the Media<sup>x</sup> should be handled by the DCPP unless the DCPP is the alleged Abuser, in which case the spokesperson should be the Clerk of Session or the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments or opinions are inappropriate.

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

Adults working with Minors as Youth Advisors<sup>xi</sup>, Church School Teachers<sup>xii</sup>, or Regular Volunteers<sup>xiii</sup> will be required to fill out the **Acknowledgement and Agreement Form**. Before placing a person in a position of responsibility the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation and Community Life, the Director of Children & Family Ministries (for Younger

and Elementary Children), the Director of Youth Ministries (for Youth), or the Minister of Music will review the *Acknowledgement and Agreement Form*. This form will include:

1. **Acknowledgement of Receiving This Policy** – Adults working with Minors must acknowledge they have read and agrees to follow this policy. These policies and procedures will be discussed with the applicant. The applicant shall then be questioned about any matter that raises a concern about the fitness of that person to serve in a position of responsibility, including if:
  - The person wants to work alone or wants to work with only one age or gender;
  - The person has lived at more than three addresses or has attended three or more churches in the last five years;
  - The person has been charged with a crime against a Minor. (Persons who have been previously convicted or pled guilty or no contest to a crime against a Minor(s) will not be permitted to be in a position giving supervisory access to Minors.); or References are not able to be reached or do not give unqualified recommendations in support of the applicant.
2. **References** - The respective Staff Member will review the information on the application and will contact references provided on the *Acknowledgement and Agreement Form*. A written record of such contact will be retained with the application form.
3. **Background Check** - Ohio Revised Code 109-574-557 also requires any person working with Minors to sign a statement allowing fingerprints and/or a criminal background check to be made at any time. These forms will be maintained in confidential personnel file.
4. **General Release Form** – which provides important emergency information including health insurance, allergies, etc.
5. **Training** -- Youth Advisors, Church School Teachers, and Regular Volunteers will be provided additional training on Child protection issues (see section titled Training for Persons Working with Minors).

Special guest speakers, artists, musicians, guest participants, Parents, friends of advisors, etc. participating in specific one-time activities do not need to go through the process outlined in this section.

## GENERAL SUPERVISION OF MINORS

- **Court Orders And Custody Arrangements** – If it is brought to a Staff Members attention that the law/ Courts regulate or restricts a Parent's<sup>xiv</sup> or specific Adults access to a Minor, we will do all in Our power to abide by court orders and court custody arrangements.
- **Open Door Policy** -- When conducting activities with Minors the door should remain open whenever possible. If the door needs to be closed there should be a window in the door. Parents and Staff Members are encouraged to observe programs and classrooms organized for Minors.
- **Attendance Record Retention** -- Activities for Minors will have a written record of the name of participants and supervisors. Records shall be kept for three years.
- **Counseling** -- An Adult counseling or mentoring Minors (including Confirmation Mentors, Staff Members, Youth Advisors, Regular Volunteers, Church School Teachers, etc.) on a one-on-one basis may meet individually with them after informing a Staff Member or the Minor's Parent(s). It is best to use public places or the church as a location. If the counseling takes place in the Minor's home, a Parent shall be in the home. If the counseling takes place in a Staff Member's office there needs to be a window in the Office door or the door needs to remain open.
- **Music Lessons** -- The minister of music may give private lessons in the church with the Minor's Parent approval.
- **Sick Minors** – If a Minor becomes ill, sick, or simply does not feel well during a Fairmount Presbyterian Church Sponsored activity, it is acceptable for a Staff Member to give special permission for one Adult to supervise the Minor -- instead of the normal guideline of two Adults.

## TRANSPORTATION OF MINORS

- Driver must be an Adult 21 years of age or older.
- Driver must have a valid state driver's license.
- Driver must have insurance for his/her vehicle.

The designated leader from each activity will be responsible for assuring that each driver is aware of these policies. It is not necessary for two adults to be present to take a Minor home from an activity or to pick a Minor up from his/her home or school; however Adults should avoid having only one Minor in their car whenever possible. It is best to notify a Staff Member or the Parent prior to transporting a Minor.

## OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES FOR MINORS

For overnight activities the designated leader will have with them the emergency medical information for each Minor.

### *Permission Slip Form*

Parents will be required to send with their Minor a completed **Permission Slip Form** before their Minor is able to participate in an overnight activity or an activity taking place more than fifty miles from the Church. This form must state the Parent is aware of the following:

- NAME: The name of the activity
- DATE: The date of drop off and approximate date and time of pick-up
- LOCATION: The location of the activity and phone number where the Minor can be reached in an emergency
- LEADERS NAME: The name(s) of the Staff Member and/ or Adults in charge of the activity

### *Sleeping Arrangements*

- An Adult should not sleep in the same bed as a Minor unless the Adult is his/her Parent.
- An Adult should not sleep alone in a room with a Minor unless the Adult is his/her Parent.
- In occasions where Adults are sleeping in a room with Minors and without another Adult present, it is best to have 4 or more Minors in the room.

## SUPERVISION OF YOUTH

Organized activities involving Youth are supervised by two or more Adults. When this is not possible a Staff Member can give special permission for an activity to occur with just one Adult.

### *Youth Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure*

Sign-In will not be required for Youth activities, but Adults responsible for the activity shall remain with the Youth until all have been picked up. In those circumstances where a Minor's transportation from an activity arrives after all other Minor's transportation has departed, the presence of two adults is not necessary but the remaining adult is responsible for insuring the Youth is picked up.

## SUPERVISION OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

Organized activities involving Young Children and Elementary Children are supervised by either two or more Adults or one Adult and one or more Youth. When this is not possible a Staff Member can give special permission for an activity to occur with just one Adult. When a Parent is on the premises, Youth may be given responsibility for Young Children or Elementary Children as long as the Parent knows of the arrangement and the Youth is under the supervision of an Adult.

### *Young Children Check-in/ Check-out Procedure*

On an annual basis, Parents will fill out a **Church School Registration Form** which indicates the person(s) to whom the Young Children may be checked-out. Parents with Young Children will check-in and check-out their Young Children for each activity. Adults responsible for the activity shall remain with the Young Children until all have been picked up.

### *Elementary Children Check-in/ Check-out Procedure*

Sign-In will not be required for Elementary Children, but Elementary Children below third grade or 8 years of age will only be released to Parents, older siblings, or other designated persons whom the Parents have identified. Adults responsible for the activity shall remain with the Elementary Children until all have been picked up.

### *Classroom Activities*

When it is impossible to abide by the supervision guidelines outlined above in “SUPERVISION OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND ELEMENTARY CHILDREN,” Young Children and Elementary Children will be sent to worship service with their Parents.

## PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING CONCERNS

Persons working with Minors could have their suspicion or concern of Abuse raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:

1. the conduct of a Staff Member or an Adult interacting with Minors;
2. a Child “disclosing” Abuse;
3. bruising or evidence of physical abuse; which may or may not be accompanied by;
4. unusual behavior by a Child.

Abuse generally comes in four different forms: Physical Abuse<sup>xv</sup>, Emotional Abuse<sup>xvi</sup>, Sexual Abuse<sup>xvii</sup>, or Neglect<sup>xviii</sup>. If Abuse is suspected by, observed by, or disclosed to an Adult, the following procedures are to be followed:

- It is a requirement of Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421 State Law that Adults immediately notify the proper authorities (municipal or county police if the danger is imminent or the conduct criminal. The public Children Services agency or a municipal or county peace officer in the county in which the Child resides or in which the Abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred). The telephone number for the Cuyahoga County Department of Child and Family Services is 216-696-KIDS (5437).
- Concerns about a specific Minor should be reported immediately in person or by telephone to the DCPD and confirmed in writing within 24 hours using the **Incident Report Form**.
- Concerns about an alleged Abuser who is not the DCPD should be conveyed in person or by telephone to the DCPD immediately and confirmed in writing within 24 hours using the **Incident Report Form**.
- The DCPD will consider the Incident Report and refer it immediately to the authorities or, after taking appropriate advice (which may include discussing the circumstances on a confidential basis with the NSPCC), decide not to refer the concerns to the authorities but keep a full record of the concerns.
- If the alleged Abuser is the DCPD, the Adult should contact the Clerk of Session, General Presbyter or the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve. It is suggested that another minister on the Church Staff also be notified.
- After reporting the suspected Abuse to the proper authorities, the DCPD, the relevant Staff Member and relevant parties should complete the **Incident Report Form** and attach a copy of the police report if available.
- Once the proper authorities have been contacted the DCPD will inform the accused that a report has been made.
- If the accused is an Adult who works with Minors, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is also a Staff Member receiving compensation arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income depending on all circumstances until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

## PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS

In the event of an injury or accident to a Minor participating in an organized activity, the first priority is the health and well-being of the Minor. In order to assure proper attention, an **Accident Report Form** will be completed by an adult supervisor or the DCPD after the accident is resolved or dealt with.

## TRAINING FOR PERSONS WORKING WITH MINORS

The church shall provide training focused on issues regarding this policy for Adults working with Minors. Staff Members will be encouraged and supported to participate in training or continuing education courses focused on issues of the protection of Minors.

The training shall include:

- The definition and recognition of Abuse.
- The church's policy and procedures on reporting Abuse and appropriate forms.
- The purposes of this policy as protection for Minors, Staff Members, Youth Advisors, Church School Teachers, and Regular Volunteers.
- The meaning and importance of confidentiality.
- The maintenance of a positive learning classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level expectations.
- The appropriate behavior for Adults.

## DEFINITIONS

<sup>i</sup> **Our** -- Fairmount Presbyterian Church, Church Members, Youth Advisors, Christians, Staff Members, Regular Volunteers, Church School Teachers

<sup>ii</sup> **Abuse** – Abuse can come in four forms.

<sup>iii</sup> **Minor** -- an Young Children, Elementary Children, or Youth

<sup>iv</sup> **Young Children** –new born through kindergartener or 6 years old, whichever is older.

<sup>v</sup> **Elementary Children** – persons in grade one or 7 years old through grade six or 12 years old, whichever is older.

<sup>vi</sup> **Youth** – persons in grade seven or 13 years old through grade twelve or 18 years old whichever is older; or a person 18 years to 21 years old that is mentally or physically disabled.

<sup>vii</sup> **Sponsored** – For an activity to be considered a “Sponsored activity”: First, an Adult Member or Staff Member of Fairmount Presbyterian Church must oversees the programming (planning and/ or execution). AND Second, it must either take place at the Church or the inviting of attendees must be done through Fairmount Presbyterian Church communications (emails, website, bulletins, monthly flyers, etc.)

<sup>viii</sup> **DCPP** – “Designated Child Protection Person” - Fairmount Presbyterian Church has designated the Head Pastor as the DCPP responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of Minors.

<sup>ix</sup> **NSPCC** -- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

<sup>x</sup> **Media** – Newspaper, Radio, TV, News, Magazines, etc. Any means by which communication is passed from one person to a group of people.

<sup>xi</sup> **Youth Advisor** – An Adult participating in the supervision of 20 or more Youth activities per year.

<sup>xii</sup> **Church School Teacher** – An Adult participating in the supervision of 20 or more Children activities per year.

<sup>xiii</sup> **Regular Volunteers** – An Adult participating in the supervision of 20 or more Minors' activities per year.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Parent** – includes Surrogate Parents, Legal Guardians, Adoptive Parents and Biological Parents

<sup>xv</sup> **Physical Abuse** -- may involve intentional hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a Minor. Physical Abuse is the result of a deliberate act.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Emotional Abuse** -- is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a Minor such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the Minor's emotional development. It may involve making a Minor feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Some level of emotional Abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a Minor, though it may occur alone.

<sup>xvii</sup> **Sexual Abuse** -- involves forcing or enticing a Minor to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the Minor is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve physical contact including intercourse, oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females and by other young people. It also includes non-contact activities such as involving Minors in watching or taking part in the making of pornographic material.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Neglect** -- is the persistent failure to meet a Minor's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the Minor's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a Minor gets appropriate medical care or treatment.