

***SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH--  
POLICY ON PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, AND EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT***

**CORNERSTONE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
CARY, NORTH CAROLINA**

**I. Philosophy**

Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (CSPC) is a congregation that is committed to addressing the needs of children and youth, particularly insuring their safety and protection from any form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Therefore, the Session has adopted the following policies to provide direction for all employees, volunteers, parents, members and visitors to the church on how we seek to safeguard our children and youth and nurture them in Christian love.

It is the policy of CSPC that all identified above maintain the integrity of the trust relationship at all times. Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse violates the principles of the trust relationship, is contrary to Scripture, and is never permissible. CSPC condemns any act of such abuse. The church is committed to maintaining a wholesome and safe environment for work, worship, study, nurture and fellowship for all inspired by Christian love and understanding.

False accusation is a violation of trust just as abuse of a physical, sexual, or emotional nature is a violation of trust. CSPC is equally committed to preventing unfounded, mistaken, or false claims and minimizing opportunities for false accusations against our staff and volunteers.

By the adoption of this *Safeguarding our Children and Youth--Policy on Physical, Sexual, and Emotional Misconduct* (Policy), CSPC has established institutional guidelines to minimize opportunities for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and to minimize opportunities for false accusations against our staff and volunteers. The church will implement this policy for investigation and response to reports of suggested or suspected physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Through this combination of efforts, CSPC intends to minimize actual or perceived instances of abuse, to respond appropriately to those that might occur, and to guard against misinterpretations of actions as we continue our service in Christian love.

The Presbytery of New Hope adopted a policy and procedure that covers sexual misconduct allegations against ministers. This policy, *The Presbytery of New Hope Policy and Procedure on Sexual Misconduct*, revised April 24, 2002, can be found at [www.nhpresbytery.org](http://www.nhpresbytery.org). CSPC's Policy is meant to augment the Presbytery policy, providing clear direction for our congregation.

**II. Guidelines**

These Guidelines shall be followed at CSPC at all times except as noted in Section II.I of this document:

**A. Two-Adult Rule.** Volunteers and employees will strive to adhere to the "two adult" rule. This means that an adult is not alone with children or youth without another adult present. Therefore, two caregivers will be present any time childcare is offered by CSPC. Leaders should

avoid one-on-one situations with underage persons apart from visible and public settings. At least two advisors or chaperones shall be present for any youth event.

**B. Adult-Child Ratios.** In addition to the two adult rule, CSPC will strive to meet the following adult to child ratios at all times:

<b>AGE OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>ADULT TO CHILD RATIOS</b>
Infants (Birth to 12 months)	1:4
Toddlers (12-24 months)	1:5
2-Year Olds (24-30 months)	1:6
2 ½ Year Olds (30-36 months)	1:7
3 to 5 Year Olds	1:10
Kindergartners	1:12
6 to 12 Year Olds	1:15

**C. Age of Caregivers.**

1. One caregiver should be age 21 or older whenever:
  - (a) A child/ren two years of age or younger is/are present, or
  - (b) The group size is ten or more children.
2. One caregiver should be 18 or older if the children are over two years old and the group size is less than ten children.
3. In rare instances, an exceptionally responsible person younger than 21 or 18, as appropriate, may be authorized by the appropriate church staff to supervise childcare.
4. A youth 12 or older may be counted as an adult in the adult-child ratio if another caregiver meets the above requirements.

**D. Physical Environment.** CSPC will strive to provide a physical environment that minimizes risk of harm and supports careful supervision and appropriate interactions with and between children or youth. Physical surroundings and group size should allow adequate space and visibility for monitoring as well as meet the developmental needs of the children or youth using the space.

**E. Volunteer Covenant Statement and Background Checks.**

1. In keeping with the intent of this policy, all volunteers shall sign the attached Covenant Statement before assuming duties with children or youth at CSPC.
2. CSPC recognizes that certain positions require a greater degree of scrutiny due to the frequency and intensity of interaction with children and youth. Therefore, CSPC shall conduct criminal background checks for all paid nursery staff and all youth ministry advisors for middle and high school groups. These checks shall only be conducted at the beginning of service and

will not be repeated every year. CSPC recognizes that the checks may not be concluded before an individual begins service. If the completed check disqualifies any staff or volunteer from service, that person's service shall be immediately terminated.

3. In the event of (a) one's inability to sign the affirmation in the covenant, or (b) negative facts revealed as part of a background check, such facts shall be referred to the Committee described in Section III.B below for appropriate actions. Appropriate actions may include, but are not limited to, dismissal, prohibition of certain work or service by an individual, additional rules or procedures to be followed by an individual, or any other reasonable precaution necessary to safeguard the church family.

**F. Church Membership.** All Church School teachers, nursery volunteers and youth advisors must be members of the church for at least six months before serving in an official capacity in any of these programs. Any volunteer who has not been a member for six months must be approved by the Session before assuming volunteer responsibilities.

**G. Transportation.** No youth leader shall provide transportation for one youth alone without written or oral permission from the youth's parent. It is understood, however, that youth ministry volunteers may transport youth without another leader in the vehicle.

**H. Parents and Guardians Welcome.** Parents or guardians of children and youth are welcome to visit, participate in or chaperone programs in which their child is participating.

**I. Exceptions from Guidelines Requirements.** There are programs that fall within the scope of these guidelines which, by nature, require changes in specific requirements:

1. Confirmation Class: Developing a relationship with a mentor is part of the confirmation journey. Youth and mentors are encouraged to spend time together which may be one-to-one. Because this may not always be in a visible and public setting, parents and guardians shall be informed of the nature and logistics of the mentoring program.

2. Presbyterian Women's Circles and Bible Study Classes: Members of circles and Bible study classes may arrange for childcare for gatherings (often in homes) which involves only one caregiver. It is assumed that a parent is close by and able to be summoned quickly if needed.

4. Choirs: Because there may be times when only one leader is present, parents should be informed of this possibility.

5. Non-church groups: Groups that are not directly sponsored by Cornerstone Presbyterian Church are expected to follow similar guidelines for childcare and supervision.

6. Other Exceptions Approved by Session or the Pastor. Other child care offered by CSPC may be exempted from the two-adult rule, adult-child ratios, or age requirements of caregivers stated above by the Session or the Pastor.

### **III. Procedures for Reporting and Handling Violations**

**A. Violation of the Section II Guidelines.** Volunteers and employees who have knowledge or are suspicious of a violation of any of the Guidelines listed above in Section II of this Policy shall immediately report such concern to the pastor of CSPC. The pastor shall report such violation to the elder in charge of that program, and the two together shall form a corrective plan of action to avoid similar future violations.

**B. Report of Known or Suspected Abuse.** Volunteers and employees who have knowledge or are suspicious of inappropriate behavior with children or youth by another volunteer, employee, child or youth (other than as set forth in Section III.A for a violation of a specific Guideline) shall immediately report such behavior to the Pastor. All such reports will be heard and taken seriously. The Pastor shall form a committee consisting of the Pastor, the elder in charge of the program under which the violation occurred and one elder chosen by the Pastor for this purpose (Committee). The Committee shall investigate the facts surrounding the alleged misconduct and shall confer as to the appropriate action to be taken. The Committee may take the actions they agree are appropriate, and shall inform the Session of the actions taken. The Session may determine whether to report the actions taken to the congregation. Options for action include, but are not limited to, (1) counseling for any or all involved parties, and (2) restrictions placed on, or removal from positions involving contact with children or youth. In appropriate cases, the abuse shall be reported to the local authorities as required by law.

To the extent possible, but subject to the procedures set forth, the complainant and/or the victim should receive the respect of privacy and confidentiality. The Pastor shall keep the victim's parent informed about the procedures taken and the progress of the case. Nothing in these procedures is intended to prohibit the victim or his or her parents from reporting the alleged violation to the proper local authorities.

To the extent possible, but subject to the procedures set forth, the accused should receive the respect of privacy and confidentiality. The accused shall be informed about the accusation, the procedures to be followed and the progress of the case by the Pastor. The accused shall receive pastoral support.

Only the Pastor or the Pastor's designee shall respond to media contact about the case.

#### **IV. References**

All references in this policy to the Pastor shall include a reference to any Interim Pastor or, in the absence of either, to the acting Head of Staff.

### Covenant Statement for CSPC Volunteers

This covenant shall be a bond between the congregation of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church and the volunteers who are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all who participate in its ministries. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a sanctuary for all who would enter and as a place where all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

**Policy.** In keeping with the covenant of baptism, we, the congregation of CSPC, have committed ourselves to the nurturing of our children. They cannot learn to love and trust God when those who represent God to them are unloving and untrustworthy. We promise our children that we will:

- provide the structure, education, and policies that will keep them safe from harm and abuse; and
- screen volunteers, train them, and ask that they abide by the policies of our church.

**Agreement.** As a volunteer working with children in this congregation, I agree:

- to affirm my commitment to support CSPC as a safe place for children and youth;
- to observe and abide by all church policies regarding ministries with children and youth, including the *Safeguarding Our Children and Youth – Policy on Physical, Sexual and Emotional Misconduct* (Policy), which I have received and reviewed;
- to observe all Guidelines set forth in the Policy, including the two-adult rule, the age of caregivers, the adult-child ratios and the transportation requirements;
- to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment;
- to report abusive or inappropriate behavior promptly to the Pastor;
- that CSPC may undertake a criminal background check on me and I agree to cooperate in any way, at no cost to me, to accomplish that check.

**Certification.** I certify by my signature that I have not to my knowledge been the subject of any investigation, legal or church-related action or complaint involving a reported instance of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children or youth. I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to any abuse. I promise to report any future investigation, complaint or action promptly to the pastor of CSPC.

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Signature of Volunteer

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Print Full Name

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Date

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Signature of Pastor

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Print Full Name

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Date