

Child Protection Policy

Cherokee Presbytery

To Be Adopted by Cherokee Presbytery August 23, 2016

The members of Cherokee Presbytery believe that we are called by God to create a safe haven for all of the children and youth in our care, nurturing, protecting, and empowering them through faith and trust. This commitment includes taking appropriate steps to reduce the risk to the young people in our care. The following policy was established to minimize the risk of any of our children and youth being subjected to sexual, physical, or mental abuse. These policies and procedures are also intended to respect the rights and afford due process to persons accused of improper conduct.

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In establishing policies and procedures that provide safeguards against child or youth abuse at Cherokee Presbytery camps and events requiring childcare, four critical areas must be addressed:

- Screening and selection of volunteers and staff
- Supervision of volunteers and staff
- Reporting allegations
- Response to allegations

A. PAID SUMMER CAMP STAFF

SELECTING AND SCREENING OF STAFF

- All applicants for summer camp staff/counselor positions will complete an application form. This application must be accompanied by a consent form giving Cherokee Presbytery permission to conduct a criminal background check. The applicant's consent forms will be kept on file at Cherokee Presbytery.
- Members of the Cherokee Retreat Center and Camp Operations Team will review application forms, interview applicants, contact references, and will keep the applications on file. The references will be kept with the personnel records for each applicant.
- The designated Presbytery staff persons to the CRCC Operations Team will conduct the background checks and may consult with the moderator of the Committee concerning the results of any background check. Background checks will be destroyed following the Committee's decision regarding employment. Name, Date of Birth, Date of Background Check, and Social Security Number of cleared persons will be kept on file at the Presbytery Office.
- "Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a person from participating in the leadership or sponsorship of any children's or youth activity or program related to Cherokee Presbytery:

Any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse; sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance with a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials or prohibited substances to a minor; employment harmful to children; or abandonment or endangerment of a child. All other convictions or charges for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the appropriate committee seeking to secure the particular employee or volunteer."

SUPERVISION OF CAMP STAFF

- “Two Adult Rule”:
As often as possible, there should be at least two adults (18 and over) assigned to each cabin. When anywhere on the camp grounds, if at all possible, make sure that an adult is not left alone one on one with a child or youth. This will be emphasized at staff training. *If an adult needs to be alone with a young person, that contact should take place in a public setting and with the knowledge of another staff member.*

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

- Instruct all counselors in training sessions to refer to the “Policies” section of the *SUMMER CAMP STAFF MANUAL* regarding the reporting procedure and the requirements of state and local laws regarding the reporting of child abuse. If you have questions about reporting, contact your local Child Protective Services or Police Department.
- Anyone aware of inappropriate contact involving a child or youth, regardless of where the conduct occurred, must immediately report the questionable activity to the Camp Director or Assistant Camp Director. The Assistant must report to the Director.
- If an incident is witnessed or reported, that person should first secure the safety of the child. The child or young person should not be left alone.
- The Camp Director is to immediately notify the appropriate Presbytery staff person, the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery, the on-site Camp Manager, and Child Protective Services.
- The person initially contacted by the alleged victim, or who observed the offense, should immediately fill out a written report recorded verbatim, called an “Incident Report.”
- The CRCC Operations Team will prepare a list of agencies to be contacted. This list should be attached to the “Incident Report” form.
- The Camp Director and Assistant Camp Director shall have the “Incident Report” forms available in the CRCC Office.
- Any accusation made after the camp season is over shall be directed to the Response Team (see below) through the Office of the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

- A Response Team composed minimally of the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery, Moderator of the CRCC Operations Team, and Moderator of the Coordinating Team will be

convened by the Stated Clerk.

- The Response Team should immediately contact the presbytery's legal counsel and insurance company.
- The Response Team should immediately inform the accused and the accuser that they have the right to retain their own counsel. The presbytery's counsel will represent the presbytery but not their individual interests.
- The Response Team is to contact the families of the alleged victim and the accused to communicate action already taken. ("Here's what's already been done; here's what is going to be done.") The continuing pastoral care of the alleged victim and family, and the accused, needs to be done by someone outside of the Response Team, such as another pastor in the presbytery.
- All presbytery staff and camp staff should be instructed that all communications about any incidents come only from the Response Team. The Response Team should prepare a statement for possible use with the media.
- If the accused is a member of the clergy, s/he is also subject to the "Rules of Discipline" of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Presbytery's "Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct".

B. VOLUNTEERS AT SUMMER CAMPS AND ADULT ADVISORS WHO ATTEND CHILDREN OR YOUTH EVENTS

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS AND ADVISORS/SPONSORS

- The Presbytery requires each local church to adopt its own child protection policy and screening procedure, which includes a security background check to ensure the safety and protection of its own children and youth. The Presbytery relies on the local church session to fulfill its own responsibility to its children and youth.
- Ordinarily, volunteers and advisors/sponsors will only be permitted to serve as sponsors at presbytery events if they have been members of the local church for a period of not less than six months, unless the adult volunteer or advisor/sponsor is transferring from active membership in another church where references can be obtained.
- All volunteers and adult advisors/sponsors for Cherokee Presbytery Youth or Children Events are required to sign a Covenant of Conduct Form, which includes a question about previous infractions regarding sexual misconduct.
- Each church must annually submit an "Acknowledgement of Child Abuse Prevention Form"

which lists those adults who have had security background checks and are approved to serve as leaders and sponsors in order to participate in Presbytery events. A file will be kept at the Presbytery office and can be amended throughout the year.

- An Information Form, along with a Consent Form will be completed by each individual who is volunteering for summer camp. The form provides personal and confidential information necessary to perform criminal background checks and reference checks. Consent Forms authorizing Cherokee Presbytery to conduct criminal background checks will be kept on file at the Presbytery Office. The designated Cherokee Presbytery staff person, on behalf of the appropriate presbytery committee or task group, will conduct the background checks on Summer Camp Volunteers and may consult with the moderator of that committee or task group concerning the results of any background check. Background checks will be destroyed after a decision has been made regarding that person's involvement with the planned conference or event. Name, Date of Birth, Date of Background check, and Social Security Number of cleared persons will be kept on file at the Cherokee Presbytery Office. The designated presbytery staff person, or their designee, will contact references by telephone or mail.
- At each camp session or event an orientation will be held for volunteers and sponsors, which will include the subject of preventing sexual abuse.

"Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a person from participating in the leadership or sponsorship of any children's or youth activity or program related to Cherokee Presbytery:

Any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse; sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance with a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials or prohibited substances to a minor; employment harmful to children; or abandonment or endangerment of a child. All other convictions or charges for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the appropriate committee seeking to secure the particular employee or volunteer."

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS, ADULT ADVISORS AND SPONSORS

- While recognizing that significant ministry often takes place as the adult and youth share one-on-one, some very clear guidelines should be established for your group.
- "Two adult rule":
As often as possible, there should be at least two adults in each small group. On the retreat grounds, as much as is possible, make sure that an adult is not left alone one on one with a child or youth. This must be emphasized at the orientation.
- Safety suggestions: always meet in a public space when only one youth and one adult are

present; remain in sight of others; make sure that at least one other adult is aware of what is taking place.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

- At the orientation session, make sure all adult volunteers and adult sponsors know the incident reporting procedure and the requirements of state and local laws regarding the reporting of child abuse. If you have questions about reporting, contact your local Child Protective Services or Police Department.
- Anyone aware of any inappropriate contact involving a child or youth must immediately report the questionable activity to the Director of the event or any member of the Event Design Team. That member shall report to the Director.
- If an incident is witnessed or reported, that person should first secure the safety of the youth. Children and young persons should not be left alone.
- The Director of the event is to immediately notify the appropriate Presbytery staff person, the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery, the onsite camp manager or host pastor, and Child Protective Services.
- The person initially contacted by the alleged victim, or who observed the offense, should immediately fill out a written report recorded verbatim, called an "Incident Report."
- The Design Team should prepare a list with agencies to be contacted for each event. (For example: Presbytery, Child Protective Services, local police) This list should be attached to the "Incident Report" Form.
- Any accusation made after the event is over should be directed to the Response Team (see below) through the office of the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

- A Response Team composed minimally of the Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery, Moderator of the Congregational Care and Mission Team, and Moderator of the Coordinating Team will be initiated by the Stated Clerk.
- The Response Team should immediately contact the presbytery's legal counsel and insurance company.
- The Response Team should immediately inform the accused and the accuser that they have the right to retain their own counsel. The presbytery's counsel will represent the presbytery but not their individual interests.

- The Response Team is to contact the families of the alleged victim and the accused to communicate action already taken. (“Here’s what’s already been done; here’s what is going to be done.”) The continuing pastoral care of the alleged victim and family, and the accused, needs to be done by someone outside of the Response Team, such as a pastor within the presbytery.
- All presbytery staff and camp staff should be instructed that all communications about any incidents come only from the Response Team. The Response Team should prepare a statement for possible use with the media.
- If the accused is a member of the clergy, s/he is also subject to the “Rules of Discipline” of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Presbytery’s “Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct.”

C. ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT PRESBYTERY EVENTS AND MEETINGS

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

- The Presbytery will not allow a Presbytery event involving children or youth or where child care is offered to be held at a church unless the host church has a Child Protection Policy in place.
- The screening, selection and supervision process of child care workers will be handled by the host church, under the conditions of their Child Protection Policy.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF ADULTS LEADING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- If these adults have not been through a screening process at their own church, they need to complete a Volunteer Information Form which provides the personal and confidential information necessary to perform criminal background and reference checks on each individual.
- If these adults have been through a screening process at their own church, they must present verification of that fact through a form.

SUPERVISION OF ADULTS LEADING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- While recognizing that significant ministry often takes place as the adult and youth share one-on-one, some very clear guidelines should be established for your group.

- “Two adult rule”:
As often as possible, there should be at least two adults in each small group. On the retreat grounds, as much as is possible, make sure that an adult is not left alone one on one with a child or youth. This must be emphasized at the orientation.
- Safety suggestions: always meet in a public space when only one youth and one adult are present; remain in sight of others; make sure that at least one other adult is aware of what is taking place.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

- All adults working with children or youth at Presbytery events or meeting should be made aware of the incident reporting procedure by the organizers/ planning committee of the event. Allegations are to be reported to the designated contact person at the host church, who will then report the allegation to the Director of the event, or report directly to the designated Presbytery staff person in the case of a Presbytery meeting.
- The Director of the event is to notify immediately the designated Presbytery staff person for the event, the Stated Clerk, the host pastor, and the Child Protective Services.
- Any accusation made after the event is over should be directed to the Response Team (see below) through the office of Stated Clerk.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

- A Response Team composed minimally of the Stated Clerk, Moderator of the Congregational Care and Nurture Team, and the Moderator of the Coordinating Team will be convened by the Stated Clerk.
- The Response Team should immediately contact the presbytery’s legal counsel and insurance company.
- The Response Team should immediately inform the accused and the accuser that they have the right to retain their own counsel. The presbytery’s counsel will represent the presbytery but not their individual interests.
- The Response Team is to contact the families of the alleged victim and the accused to communicate action already taken. (“Here’s what’s already been done; here’s what is going to be done.”) The continuing pastoral care of the alleged victim and family, and the accused, needs to be done by someone outside of the Response Team, such as a pastor or social worker.

- All presbytery staff and camp staff should be instructed that all communications about any incidents come only from the Response Team. The Response Team should prepare a statement for possible use with the media.
- If the accused is a member of the clergy, s/he is also subject to the "Rules of Discipline" of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Presbytery's "Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct".

D. PROHIBITED ACTS

"The following acts are prohibited by this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any Cherokee Presbytery activity or program. Any observations or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the Moderator of the Session, Director of the Event or Program, or designated program staff representing Cherokee Presbytery after the safety of the child, children, or youth involved has been assured.

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child or youth;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between a youth and a child;
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth;
- Physical neglect of a child, children, or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the presbytery;
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children or youth;
- Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of Cherokee Presbytery with the exception of sex education materials (NOTE: Cherokee Presbytery does not consider sex education materials to be obscene or pornographic, especially those which have been produced by the denomination for use in church-related programs.);
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or any prohibited substance while leading or participating in a children's or youth function of the presbytery."

E. CONSEQUENCES

- Any person accused of committing a Prohibited Act, whether a staff member, employee, member, or volunteer, will immediately be reassigned to responsibilities without direct child contact. If investigation supports the accusations, the accused person will be suspended from participation in all children's and youth activities and programs of Cherokee Presbytery. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the church and/or law enforcement or child protection agencies.
- Any person found to have committed a Prohibited Act shall be prohibited from future

participation in children's and youth activities and programs of Cherokee Presbytery. If the person is a staff member or employee of the presbytery, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

- As required by Georgia law, all reports of abuse will be forwarded in a timely manner by Cherokee Presbytery to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement authorities. Such reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this Child Protection Policy.
- Failure to timely report a Prohibited Act to the designated person shall be considered a procedural violation of this Child Protection Policy and shall be grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee and suspension and dismissal from participation in all children's and youth activities and programs of Cherokee Presbytery by any person.
- When the allegations involve a member of the clergy, the provisions of Cherokee Presbytery's "Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Clergy Sexual Misconduct" will be put into operation and the guidance of the church's discipline will be followed.

