

# GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church (GCPC) recognizes that the children of our church are among our most precious gifts. When they are entrusted to our care, we have a solemn responsibility to provide the safest possible environment for their Christian growth and development. Therefore, GCPC has established the **Child Protection Policy** as set forth herein.

The State of Kansas defines a child as anyone from birth to age eighteen. GCPC designates a difference between children and youth in programming. ***However, for the purpose of this policy, all people below the age of eighteen will be referred to as children and fall under the guidelines described.***

Child Abuse refers to an act of commission by a parent or caretaker that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health and well being. This could include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or emotional or verbal abuse.

Children need love. At times, this can be appropriately expressed through physical touch, such as hugging, a pat on the back, an arm around the shoulder, holding an infant or toddler, etc. Adult staff and volunteers should not force affection on any child. If a child pulls away, even with another adult present, the child's wishes will be respected at all times.

### **Employment and Screening**

All paid employees and volunteers working with children will be subject to the screening process defined in this policy. Definitions of paid employees and volunteers follow:

- **Paid Employee.** Any person receiving compensation from GCPC.
- **Volunteers.** For the purpose of this policy are:

**Any person who donates time for a program and/or activity that involves children (as defined above), or is a member of Children's Team, Youth Team or Music Team.**

1. Any member of the congregation, volunteer or a paid employee, who has been convicted of a crime against a child, or a violent crime against another adult, will not provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children.
2. All volunteers working with children are required to be members of GCPC for a minimum of six (6) months. Program staff has the authority to make an exception for volunteers who are non-members and/or have not been members for six months to serve in an *assistant capacity*, working with a member who meets the six-month requirement.
3. All paid employees and volunteers will complete the following procedures before participating in church-sponsored children's activities.

- Submit a Screening Form and Permission to Obtain a Background Check to the appropriate Program Director for review and acceptance. Complete required training activities directed by the program staff member.

4. It is the responsibility of the Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Music Ministries and Director of Children's Ministry to see that staff and volunteers, under their supervision, complete screening and training as outlined in this policy and understand that compliance may be evaluated annually. The screening forms and their results will be kept confidential and will be retained by the Business Administrator.
5. Adult survivors of childhood abuse are encouraged to discuss their desire to work with children with one of the pastoral staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.

## Training

Training in the child protection policy will be provided for all people who will be working with children.

1. Development of appropriate training is the task of the team responsible for the age group involved, with the advice and approval of the appropriate staff members and Session.
2. All training programs will include a review of the **Child Protection Policy**, including its procedures and forms.
3. The **Child Protection Policy** of GPCP will be included in the packet to all New Members, and will be publicized and made available to all members of the congregation.

## Supervision

1. Volunteer workers will follow the direction of the supervisor responsible for each activity. Additional supervisory responsibility for children's activities is vested as follows:
  - First with the paid staff member responsible for the age group involved including, but not limited to: Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Music Ministries, Kids' Day Out Director, Paid Nursery Worker(s), and Intern(s).
  - Second, with the team responsible for the specific age group;
  - Third with the Pastors;
  - And ultimately with Session.
2. At least two adults trained in this policy will be present to supervise all activities involving children in accordance with State Department of Health Standards. These guidelines include:

<u>Age of Children</u>	<u>Minimum Staff/Child Ratio</u>	<u>Maximum Number of Children/per Group</u>
Infants (two weeks-12 Months)	1 to 3	9
Infants to six years	1 to 4 (max. 2 infants)	8 (max. 4 infants)
Toddlers (12 months to 2 ½ years, if walking alone)	1 to 5	10
2 years to 3 years	1 to 7	14
2 ½ years to school age	1 to 10	20
3 years to school age	1 to 12	24
Kindergarten enrollees	1 to 14	28
School Age	1 to 16	32

3. Some youth classes may only have one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors of the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three (3) students with the adult teacher.
4. Supervisory adults should remain at each activity until its scheduled conclusion.
5. Parental permission forms will be required for any GCPC church sponsored, off premises activity involving children. These forms will be completed annually.
6. Any volunteer who is the only adult present during any activity involving children should report that fact to either the immediate supervisor or Pastor(s).  
\* An Adult counseling, mentoring, or interacting with children (including Confirmation Mentors, Staff Members, Youth Advisors, Church School Teachers, Regular volunteers, etc) on a one-on-one basis may meet individually with them after informing a Staff Member and/or the Child's parent(s). It is best to use public places or the church as a location. If the interaction takes place in the child's home, a parent shall be in the home. If it takes place in a Staff Member's office, there needs to be a window in the office door or the door must remain open.
7. GCPC rooms used for children will have doors equipped with windows or peepholes, or the door must remain open.
8. It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.
9. At the discretion of GCPC employed staff, volunteers may be counted as staff in the staff/child ratio if they are 16 years of age or older, have been trained in the child protection policy, and are supervised at all times by employed staff.

### **Transportation**

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

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 be present to take a Minor home from an activity or to pick up a Minor from his/her home or school at the request of the parent(s) 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. The number of persons in the vehicle will not exceed the number of usable seatbelt/ restraints in the vehicle.

## **Reporting**

Any paid employee or volunteer who has “reason to suspect” that a child has been physically, sexually, emotionally, or verbally abused **will** report a suspected case of child abuse (K.S.A. 38-1522). A report should be made using the following procedure:

1. When the necessity for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect arises, the protection of children is the most important concern. The confidentiality of the minister/parishioner is very important, however where there is a reason to suspect, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a grievous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.
  
1. When a volunteer or paid employee of a GCPC-sponsored program or event suspects that abuse is taking or has taken place, he or she may report the abuse on his or her own initiative. Reporting Forms can be obtained from the Business Administrator. Reports should be made to the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) at **1-800-922-5330** or the appropriate law enforcement agency. The volunteer or paid employee will also expeditiously notify a Pastor(s) or the Business Administrator of the suspected abuse and how the report was made, and the Pastor or Business Administrator will complete and file the Form for Reporting Abuse.  
If the volunteer chooses not to report individually, he or she should immediately contact a Pastor(s) or Business Administrator. The Pastor should then complete the Form for Reporting Abuse and make the report promptly.
  
2. If the person suspected of the alleged abuse is a volunteer or paid employee, he or she will immediately be removed from contact with children by the Pastoral staff.
  
3. If and when the volunteer or paid employee is cleared of the alleged abuse, he or she may be reinstated by the Pastor(s).
  
4. Public statements regarding the alleged offense will be made only by the Business Administrator or the Pastor(s).
  
5. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE PERSON WHO RECEIVED THE REPORT OF THE ALLEGED OFFENSE ATTEMPT TO CONDUCT ANY FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF THE ALLEGATION ON HIS OR HER OWN INITIATIVE. This is best left to professionals.**







## Church Work and Prior Children's Work

Name of church of which you are a member: \_\_\_\_\_

How Long: \_\_\_\_\_

List (Name & Address) other Churches you have attended regularly during the last five years:

\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous church work involving children. Include church's name and address, type of work performed and dates: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous non church work involving children. Include the organization's name and address, type of work performed and dates: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List any gifts, callings, training, education or other factors which have prepared you for work with children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Personal References (not former employees or relatives)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature that may at any time result to my heirs, or family, or myself as a result of compliance or any attempt to comply, with this authorization. I have not, and will not, commit child abuse. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Child Protection Policy. I verify that I have received, read and agree to observe this policy. I further state that I have carefully read this release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement that I have read and understand.

*Applicant's Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Witness:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_