

**SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
NORTH RALEIGH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC**

I. Philosophy

North Raleigh Presbyterian Church (NRPC) 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 directions 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 NRPC 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. NRPC 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. NRPC 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, a policy on Physical, Sexual, and Emotional Misconduct, NRPC 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, NRPC 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. NRPC's Policy is meant to augment the Presbytery policy, providing clear direction for our congregation.

II. Guidelines

These Guidelines shall be followed at NRPC 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 NRPC. 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 children/youth event.

B. Age of Caregivers

1. One caregiver should be age 21 or older whenever:
 - (a) A child/ren two years of age or younger is present, or
 - (b) The group size is ten or more children.
2. One caregiver should be 18 or older if the children/youth are over two years old and the group size is less than ten children/youth.
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 ration if another caregiver meets the above requirements.

C. Physical Environment NRPC 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.

D. Volunteer Covenant Statement and Background Checks

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

E. Church Membership All church teachers, nursery volunteers, and children/youth advisors must be members of the church before serving in an official capacity in any of these programs. Any volunteer who is not a member must be approved by the Session before assuming volunteer responsibilities.

F. Transportation No children/youth leader shall provide transportation for one child/youth alone without written or oral permission from the child's/youth's parent. It is understood, however, that children/youth ministry volunteers may transport children/youth without another leader in the vehicle. All adults transporting children/youth should follow basic car safety and NC laws, including, but not limited to: child booster seat laws, 12 years and under riding in the backseat, and all children/youth using safety belts at all times.

G. 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.

H. 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 Bible Study Classes: Members of a Bible Study class may arrange for childcare for gatherings which involves only one caregiver. It is necessary that the parent be close by and able to be summoned quickly if needed.
3. Choirs: Because there may be times when only one leader is present, parents should be informed of this possibility.
4. Non-church groups: Groups that are not directly sponsored by North Raleigh Presbyterian Church are expected to follow similar guidelines for childcare and supervision. Acceptance of this policy will need to be confirmed.
5. Other Exceptions Approved by Session and/or the Pastor: Other child care offered by NRPC may be exempted from the two-adult rule or age requirements of caregivers stated above by the Session and/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 NRPC.

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 violations 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 place 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 NRPC Volunteers

This covenant shall be a bond between the congregation of North Raleigh 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 NRPC, 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
- screen volunteers, train them, and ask that they abide by the policies of NRPC

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

- to affirm my commitment to support NRPC 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**, which I have received and reviewed
- to observe all Guidelines set forth in the Policy, including the two-adult rule, the age of caregivers, 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 NRPC may undertake a criminal background check on my 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 NRPC.

Signature of Volunteer

Printed Full Name

Date

Signature of Pastor

Printed Full Name

Date

