

Child Protection Policy Statement

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arlington, VA

Adopted by the Session on June 11, 2024

Trinity Presbyterian Church (TPC) and its members are committed to the safety, welfare and protection of all children and youth participating in the activities and programs of the Church. During each baptism of an infant, child or adult, the congregation pledges to nurture and support that person in the household of God. To these ends, the Session hereby adopts these policies and procedures in order to prevent the possibility that any child will be subjected to physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect by Church staff, paid childcare workers, teachers or volunteers while engaged in church programs or activities. The policies and procedures adopted seek to balance the security and welfare of the children and legitimate expectations of privacy of staff and volunteers. In addition to this policy, the National Capital Presbytery Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy covers all clergy.

Administration

The Education & Nurture (EN) Ministry of TPC is responsible for the oversight of the Child Protection Policy (CPP). The Pastor and TPC staff also serve as leaders and advisors and perform key roles in implementing the CPP. All documentation associated with the CPP will be handled with strict confidence and respect for privacy.

Definitions

- a. The term “child” or “children” is defined as a person or persons younger than 18 years of age.
- b. The term “youth” is defined as a person or persons in middle school or high school; if they are younger than 18 years of age, they are also included in the terms “child” or “children”. Youth who are 18 years of age or older are legally adults, but they are still protected by the Child Protection Policy (CPP) as participants in TPC youth activities.
- c. “Paid or volunteer leaders” is defined as all paid staff, all adults at TPC who volunteer to lead, assist, or chaperone at an activity working with children or youth, and all youth who volunteer at an activity working with a child or children.
- d. **“Multi-day events” is defined as programs or events that are regularly recurrent, or scheduled for 2 or more consecutive days, or include an overnight period of time. Examples include but are not limited to Sunday school, Vacation Bible School (VBS), youth lock-in, youth retreat, and youth mission trip. Volunteers generally serve all of the days and overnight periods (if applicable) for multi-day events.**

- e. The phrase “sexual misconduct” is the comprehensive term used in this statement to include:
 - Sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching
 - Sexually oriented harassment including verbal comments, exposure to pornography, obscene phone calls, inappropriate gestures, emails, texts, or other harmful uses of social media, or allowing observation of sexual activity
 - Any sexual activity between a child and an adult

Requirements and Standards of Conduct

- a. Paid or volunteer leaders shall not engage in sexual misconduct with a child or youth.
- b. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (diaper changes or first aid) are appropriate in this or any community of caring Christians. Staff and volunteers must be careful that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon another individual.
- c. Paid or volunteer leaders shall not engage in physical, verbal, emotional or other abuse of a child.
- d. Paid or volunteer leaders are tasked with guarding the physical safety and emotional well-being of those in their care.
- e. Paid or volunteer leaders should work in pairs. Two adults or youth leaders should be present with the children or youth at all activities. If one of the two needs to leave temporarily, there should be visual access to the room (open door or glass panel visual access).
- f. TPC recommends that paid or volunteer leaders transport children in groups rather than alone. In ordinary circumstances, an unaccompanied adult should not drive a single child during a church sponsored activity without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.
- g. All overnight activities must have a minimum of two adults present; for mixed youth overnights there must be both male and female paid or volunteer leaders present. Parental permission in writing is required for all overnights. On those occasions when one-on-one counseling is appropriate, the adult should notify another adult where he/she and the youth will be, preferably in a room with visual access from outside the room.
- h. Christian education teachers, youth advisors, nursery supervisors and helpers shall discipline with kindness with the goal of helping children develop a sense of responsibility and self-control. Corporal punishment of any kind within the church is unacceptable.
- i. Some volunteers will need to fill out an application form and update their information as needed. All volunteers will review and sign the full CPP Statement regularly (see the Implementation section below for details).
- j. It is recognized, that under some circumstances, there may be a wholesome and consenting relationship between two youth, one of whom may be 18 years of age or older and legally an adult by the terms of this policy. Should this happen, such a relationship

may continue without violating this policy. However, a youth group participant aged 18 years or older who is in a relationship with a youth younger than 18 years of age will not be eligible to serve in an adult volunteer capacity (chaperone, assistant, advisor, leader, teacher, etc.) with that group. Furthermore, if a young adult 18 years of age or older is volunteering in an adult capacity for a youth activity, that person will be fully accountable by the terms of this policy. Likewise, a youth group participant aged 18 years or older who volunteers for a children's activity will be fully accountable by the terms of this policy.

Implementation

- a. A CPP Statement must be provided to and signed by all adult paid or volunteer leaders participating in any TPC program or activity involving children. Staff will review and sign the CPP Statement annually. Volunteers will review and sign the CPP Statement annually when volunteering for multi-day events; otherwise, volunteers will review and sign the CPP Statement every three years.
- b. Adults volunteering for multi-day events must submit an Adult Volunteer Application Form to a TPC staff member, usually the Director of Spiritual Formation or the Youth Director or the Pastor, for review. In general, adult volunteer applications will be accepted and approved only after the applicant has fulfilled six months of active involvement in the congregation (regular attendance, participation in the life of the church). Exceptions to this volunteer application policy may be made at the discretion of the Session or a body authorized by the Session to cover short-term involvement in children's activities. In these cases, someone new to the church or from outside the TPC community will be paired with an approved volunteer or TPC staff member. Additionally, volunteer rosters for multi-day events must be approved by the Session.
- c. A TPC staff member, usually the Director of Spiritual Formation or the Youth Director or the Pastor, will review newly submitted Adult Volunteer Application Forms to determine if any additional actions are necessary beyond the notification to the applicant. Reference checks and police background checks shall be made when deemed necessary.
- d. Youth volunteering for children's activities will sign a Youth Volunteering Form that explains that youth are protected by the CPP Statement and that youth volunteers help implement the goals of the policy.
- e. Youth who are 18 years of age or older are legally adults, and will also review and sign a CPP Statement if they volunteer for a children's activity; if the activity is a multi-day event, they will also submit an Adult Volunteer Application Form.
- f. Approved volunteers are responsible for keeping the information up to date on their Adult Volunteer Application Form.
- g. Signed CPP Statements and Adult Volunteer Application Forms will be kept in locked storage in the church office for at least 5 years beyond the active service of the volunteer.

- h. All staff who work directly with children and youth will attend the Boundaries Workshop of the National Capital Presbytery every three years.

Member & Community Awareness

- a. The CPP Statement and the Adult Volunteer Application Form will be made available to the congregation on the TPC website (www.trinityarlington.org) and in the church office.
- b. The CPP Statement and Adult Volunteer Application Form will be provided to all participants in each new members class.
- c. An abbreviated summary of the CPP Statement will also be available for convenience.

Procedures for Handling Misconduct Allegations

Sexual misconduct or physical or emotional abuse or neglect involving a child, must be dealt with immediately, effectively, and fairly. At TPC, the Pastor, the EN Ministry, the Clerk of Session and the Administration Ministry share joint responsibility to ensure that reports are submitted to the proper authorities for allegations of abuse or neglect of children.

1. Allegations of sexual misconduct or physical or emotional abuse or neglect involving a child are to be reported to the Pastor, the EN Ministry chair, and/or the Clerk of Session. If the alleged offender is a TPC member or staff person, the report should be made to the Clerk of Session.
2. Virginia law requires that Arlington County Child Protective Services (CPS) be notified. Reports can be made online through the Virginia Department of Social Services Mandated Reporter Portal. If there is concern for imminent and severe danger to a child, Arlington CPS will be called immediately at 703-228-1500.
3. The TPC Administration Ministry chair will contact and involve TPC's liability carrier, verify that Child Protective Services has been notified, and that the proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings is maintained.
4. In the specific case of the complaint being made against any ordained minister, the Clerk of Session will notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk of the National Capital Presbytery and request guidance on the procedure to be followed in processing the allegation and obtaining a Moderator for the Session. The Clerk will also notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk if allegations have been raised against a TPC member or a non-ordained staff person.
5. The Administration Ministry and/or the Pastor will be responsible for maintaining contact with the police, the victim's family and for determining further actions in consultation with the Session and chair of the Administration Ministry.

Name of Volunteer (printed): _____

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and understand the TPC Child Protection Policy as described above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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