

Child Protection Policy

God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care in our hands. We believe that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. We at First United Presbyterian Church believe it is our responsibility to do all that is reasonably possible to protect the children and youth of this church from being physically or sexually abused while they are under our care. It is also our responsibility to guard our children and youth workers from being falsely suspected or accused of wrongful behavior toward a youth or child. To reduce the risk of these problems, we have adopted the following guidelines for screening and supervising all of our youth/children's ministry workers.

DEFINITION

Child Sexual Abuse or Molestation: The definition of child sexual abuse or molestation includes any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions. Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touch and non–touch.

Types of abuse involving touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of abuse that do not involving touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Child or Children: 'Child' or 'Children' means any person under the age of eighteen who is under the care, control and supervision of FUPC pastors, staff or laypersons who are acting in any capacity on behalf of the church.

Worker: Anyone who teaches, supervises, assists or otherwise works with our children on a regular basis on behalf of FUPC.

Youth: 'Youth' means any person in 6th – 12th grade under the care, control and supervision of FUPC pastors, staff or lay persons who are acting in any capacity on behalf of the church.

WORKER SELECTION AND SCREENING

1. A “youth/children’s ministry worker” is any individual who regularly supervises or has custody of minors in our church, such as a nursery attendant, Sunday school teacher, group leader or assistant.
2. All applicants for youth/children’s ministry work, whether paid or volunteer, shall complete the following screening process:
 - **Member/Six Month Rule:** In order to serve as a volunteer in youth/children’s ministry, applicant must be paired with a seasoned volunteer for the first 6 months.
 - **Application Form:** Applicants must complete an *Application for Youth/Children’s Ministry Workers*.
 - **Personal References:** Applicants must give three names for the purpose of personal references. These people must not be relatives or employers.
3. A background investigation shall be conducted on all applicants for paid positions and all volunteers in the youth/children’s ministry area. This investigation may include: (1) contact with churches or other organizations where the applicant has served; (2) contact with employers for whom the applicant worked within the past five years; and (3) a criminal record check in this state and, if applicable, in states where the applicant has lived during the past five years.
4. All information acquired during the screening process will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed to others outside the ministry leadership unless it is deemed necessary that limited disclosure is necessary to protect a child from possible harm.
5. Applicants also need to talk with the leader of the particular ministry which they wish to be involved to discuss the applicant’s gifts and qualifications and to decide how the applicant might serve in that ministry.
6. Final approval to work with youth/children’s ministry shall be made by the Senior Pastor along with the leader of the ministry.

First United Presbyterian Church’s safety rules and guidelines are as follows:

- **Two Adult Rule:** A minimum of two adult supervisors (over 21 years of age) must be present at all church-sponsored youth or children’s activities.
- **Visibility:** Personal conferences or counseling sessions must take place in view of another adult or in a room with an open door and another adult in the vicinity. An open door policy exists for all children/youth activities. Parents are welcome at any church-sponsored youth activity, anytime.
- **Supervision:** Children under the age of 16 must be under constant adult supervision while in the church or at a church-sponsored activity.
- **Permission Slips:** Parental permission slips must be obtained for any church activity that takes place off of church premises.

SUPERVISION

1. **Two Worker Rule:** At least two unrelated workers will be in the room when children are present. Speaking with children on-on-one should be done in public settings where a worker is in sight of other people. Pastors, staff members and ministry assistants will visit the children's and youth activities on a random and unannounced basis.
2. **Short Staff Policy:** Workers who will be unable to serve on a particular day must notify the appropriate staff member in advance of the absence when at all possible. If a co-worker or teaching partner is unexpectedly absent and a worker thus finds himself or herself without a second approved worker for a class or program, the worker must promptly notify the appropriate staff member who will help monitor the class by random visits. The staff member will, whenever possible, combine classes to ensure that each class is directed by two approved workers.
3. **Workers Alone with Children:** To the extent reasonably practical in any group ministry activities, no individual worker should ever be left alone in a closed room with an individual child.
4. **Adults Must Be Present:** When the occasion arises that childcare is required for church sponsored events and church facilities are used, an approved adult must be present to ensure that the safety policies relevant to the situation are followed.
5. **Temporary Workers:** Temporary workers (parent helpers, volunteers for special events) who serve in the classrooms or nursery, but are not serving on a regular basis will always work under the direct supervision of approved workers who have completed the background process, and will never have one-on-one access alone with a child.
6. **Overnight Activities:** All overnight activities must be approved in advance by the Senior Pastor. In addition, a permission slip must be completed and signed by the child's parent or guardian.
7. **Off-Site Activities:** Any Children's Ministry or Youth Ministry sponsored activity conducted at any location other than church property must be approved in advance by the Senior Pastor. If the church is providing transportation or sponsoring the transportation, the number of persons per vehicle must not exceed the number of seat belts. When transporting children is necessary, all drivers, whether driving a church-owned vehicle or their private vehicle, must be at least 25 years of age, have a valid driver's license, and current automobile insurance coverage. All drivers transporting children for church sponsored events must be approved as the church insurance liability coverage is extended to those drivers.

GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY DISCIPLINE

No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Children may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive children should be removed from the group to another part of the room.

When age appropriate, children who are disruptive should be taken to another side of the room, or if necessary, into the hallway (leaving the door fully open and within sight of other people). The worker should explain to the child that a particular behavior is unacceptable. The worker may then pray with the child asking that the Lord help the child to control him/herself.

If the disruptive behavior persists, the parents should be asked to come and sit with the child in class the following week and for as long as necessary until the child can demonstrate he/she can control themselves.

First United Presbyterian Church is committed to working with children to enable them to fully participate, but not to the detriment of other children in the class.

SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY (6th – 12th Grade)

One-on-One Meetings: One-on-One meetings with youth must be in a public setting (the church premises are designated as a public setting). If the meeting occurs in an enclosed room, the door must remain open.

Transporting Youth: When driving youths as part of a church sponsored activity, a worker should have another worker with them and must not be alone with a youth at any time.

Relationships with Youth: At no time shall an adult working in 6th – 12th grade ministry pursue a dating relationship with a youth. Workers should always be sensitive to youths with “crushes” and should not encourage, nor participate in any flirting.

Youth Classes and Small Groups: All classes and small groups at FUPC will have adequate adult supervision. One worker will be available as a “roving monitor” to randomly check in unannounced on classes and to assist youth and workers with questions and/or concerns.

Overnight Activities: Church overnight activities must be pre-approved by the Senior Pastor. Each youth must have written parental/guardian permission to participate. At least two unrelated workers must be present to oversee the activity. Sleeping arrangements will be communicated to the parents/guardians.

Scheduled Activities: Scheduled church youth activities must be pre-approved by the Senior Pastor. Adequate adult supervision must be provided during the activities.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Regarding any allegation of abuse, whether parental neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse, FUPC staff members and workers must respond quickly with the following actions:

1. Remove the child from the scene and the accused (if the alleged abuse took place on site) and put the child in a safe place.
2. Report the incident to the appropriate staff member as soon as possible. The Director or the Senior Pastor then notifies the child's parents.
3. Complete a detailed written incident report.
4. Report the incident to the appropriate persons and authorities as required by this policy.
5. Immediate emotional support must be given as appropriate, and the child should be reminded that telling someone is the correct thing to do. The person to whom the incident is reported should under no circumstances

promise not to tell anyone. Pastoral care will be offered to the child and his or her family as appropriate under the circumstances.

6. Maintain strict confidentiality over all written reports, applications, background check responses and other information concerning the child, the worker and the incident at all times.

REPORTING – A LEGAL OBLIGATION IN COLORADO

Colorado State Law (Senate Bill 210) requires clergy members, including any recognized leadership of a religious body to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. Reports must be made within 48 hours of the suspected abuse/neglect. Suspected abuse/neglect in the home should be reported to an Intake Screener at the Department of Social Services - (970) 352-1551. Reports made after business hours or on weekends should be made to the Greeley Police Department. Suspected abuse taking place in the church should be report to the Greeley Police Department. – 350-9600. Failure to report carries a penalty of \$750 fine and/or six months imprisonment. The statute affords protection for reporters who are wrong about the suspected abuse or neglect, but had good intentions. They can not be held liable. The State of Colorado also does not require that the reporter gives his/her name, but if the reporter does so, their identity will be protected.

TREATMENT OF THE ACCUSED

If the abuse is alleged to have taken place on FUPC property, the accused will not be confronted until the child is in a safe place. Based upon the best judgment, and in light of circumstances known to the ministry staff member at the time the complaint is received, it is up to the discretion of the Senior Pastor as to whether the accused will be directly questioned or confronted. If appropriate under the circumstances, pastoral counseling will be offered.

It shall be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to decide whether the accused should continue in his/her duties as a worker at FUPC pending resolution of the complaint or after its resolution. However, prior to making such a decision, the Senior Pastor will consult with the Director of the ministry area in which the alleged abuse took place.

Under no circumstances shall any FUPC representative make promises to the accused about the handling of the complaint. The Senior Pastor shall be responsible to obtain the appropriate information and make the decisions required in responding to any complaint, so that it may be acted upon and resolved in a timely manner.

Any discussions with the accused or a witness to the event, must be documented by a complete and detailed written accounts of such discussions. This record must be completed immediately and given to the Business Administrator for safekeeping. This report should include, at a minimum, information regarding the date and place of the meeting, the individuals present at the meeting, a detailed summary of what the accused or the witness said about the incident, the resolution of the issues, if any, at the conclusion of the meeting, and the need for follow-up action, if necessary.

DOCUMENT A RESOLUTION OF THE COMPLAINT

In all cases involving an incident of abuse or an allegation of abuse, the Senior Pastor shall complete at the appropriate time a report to file which summarizes all pertinent facts concerning the complaint. This report should state the specific resolution of the complaint, the reasons for that resolution, and the need for follow-up action, if any. The Business Administrator shall maintain that report in a secure file.

REPORTED OFF-SITE INCIDENTS OF ABUSE

Any incidents of abuse or allegations of abuse, which are reported to have taken place off-site by persons who are FUPC staff members, volunteers or otherwise acting on behalf of FUPC, will be handled in the same manner as on-site incidents involving FUPC staff members or volunteers as set forth in this policy. Issues such as confronting the accused or reporting to the parents of the victim and the appropriate authorities or offering pastoral counseling to the victim and/or the accused, shall be discretionary with the Senior Pastor. The documentation requirements for such complaints shall also be the same as the requirements for on-site incidents involving FUPC staff or workers.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF APPLICATIONS, RECORDS AND REPORTS

ACCESS TO RECORDS

The confidential portions of the worker's records are maintained in the Church Business Administrator's office in a secure file cabinet. The Director of the appropriate ministry area shall have access to completed application forms. Only the Church Business Administrator and the Senior Pastor shall have access to background check information.

STATEMENTS TO THE CONGREGATION AND/OR MEDIA

In the event an allegation of abuse becomes common knowledge with the FUPC congregation, it is up to the discretion of the Senior Pastor as to whether and in what manner a public statement to the congregation about the incident is appropriate. If the allegation becomes public knowledge, only the Senior Pastor is authorized to release any information or make any statements to the media. At all points in the decision making process regarding public statements, the Session shall be informed and consulted to the extent reasonably practical.

COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES

FUPC will cooperate fully with all law enforcement authorities and administrative agencies with jurisdiction in the investigation of the complaint and criminal prosecution of the offender, as required.

MISCELLANEOUS

Except where otherwise noted herein, it shall be within the sole discretion of the Senior Pastor to grant any exceptions to this policy. Such exceptions shall only be granted for good cause shown and a written statement justifying the reasons for the exception shall be prepared by the Senior Pastor, with copies distributed to the Church Business Administrator, the head of the involved ministry and the Session.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

I hereby acknowledge that I received on _____ (date) a copy of the First United Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy dated _____, that I have read the policy, understand its meaning, and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the policy.

SIGNATURE

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME

DATE