



**PROTECTION POLICY
AND PROCEDURES FOR
CHILD, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULT**

Approved (DATE)

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

NC Department of Health and Human Services --- Moore County: 910-947-2436

National Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD

POLICY APPLICATION STATEMENT

It is the policy of Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church (BMPC) that all church members, church officers, non-member employees and/or contractors, and volunteers are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy applies to all activities that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

POLICY RATIONALE

The implementation and documentation of a Child/Youth/Vulnerable protection policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me.” The Church is to be, at all levels of council and in all entities, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ.
- From Brotherhood Mutual Insurance *Guidelines for Ministry Workers*: Predators look for easy access to minors—situations where they easily can mask their intent with a persona of caring for children. Ministries are trusting by nature and often in short supply of volunteers. An enthusiastic, charismatic leader may convince a ministry to take a hands-off approach with its youth programs, saying the teens would feel more comfortable without oversight from senior leadership.
- Any type of abuse involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults has lasting and devastating effects on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the church to be a life-giving entity of Christ’s healing and hope for community and individuals, not an entity that brings harm and hurt.
- The larger Church suffers with the victim/survivor and his or her family when abuse and neglect occurs. The Church is crippled by the hurt, pain, and distrust that accompanies abuse. Not only does the Church lose its credibility at all levels, it also suffers considerable financial loss and loss of integrity. More importantly, in instances of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse within the Church, there is immeasurable spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical harm perpetrated that woefully cripples God’s call on the Church.
- The *Book of Order* states, “The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life,” and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the Church’s care, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults (*Book of Order* W- 2.3013).

- Children and youth are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also co-recipients of the graces and love of God. Jesus exemplified this in Mark 10:15–16 when he urged his followers to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. And he specifically takes up the children into his arms and blesses them. So also the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ’s love, in the same way taking up all children and youth into its arms and blessing them; providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.

DEFINITIONS

Each state has its own statutes regarding what is defined as child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse. This policy advises all sponsoring councils and entities of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to consider and be familiar with state statutes pertaining to the location of each event/activity (NCGS 7b-101).

The following is a comprehensive list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular policy. We hereby adopt the definition provided by NCGS section B-7101.

SCREENING, TRAINING, AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

Requirements for a child/youth worker, whether on a paid staff or volunteer basis:

1. **Volunteer / Employee Application**
2. **Signed verification of receipt of “Protection Policy and Procedures for Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult.”**
3. **Criminal background check:** BMPC will cover costs or fees. Background checks will be renewed at minimum once every three years.
4. **Age:** All child/youth workers must be at least 18 years old and four years older than the oldest youth whom they are serving.
5. **Training:** All adult staff/volunteers working with children/youth must participate in training prior to participation. The training shall cover the child/youth protection policy, methods of abuse prevention, and a plan of reporting. BMPC may contract with others to provide these trainings.

Immediate Ineligibility: No person may serve as a child/youth worker who has a conviction of certain felonies or misdemeanors, including, *but not limited to* violent crimes, crimes against society (e.g., drug offenses, lewdness, prostitution), or any conviction that involves sexual misconduct, sexual abuse or assault, or misuse of technology for sexual purposes—particularly if it involves misconduct or abuse with a minor.

Also, if BMPC staff or leadership is aware that a child/youth worker has a prior conviction for one of the aforementioned crimes or a related crime, then this person shall **automatically be ineligible to attend a child/youth event in any capacity.**

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

BMPC shall maintain all child/youth worker applications, results of background checks, incident reports, and related information in confidential, secured files.

REPORTING

BMPC will publicize the procedure for reporting any knowledge or suspicion of child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse or neglect as required by NC state law and to immediately report to the civil authorities (within 48 hours). Any person receiving information under this paragraph shall share that information immediately with appropriate (non-accused) staff who will then notify the Senior Pastor.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONSE

An attorney identified by BMPC or **provided by Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company's Attorney Referral Service (<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/legalassist/attorney-referral-service/>) shall be utilized for reporting purposes.** BMPC staff who may receive such reports will familiarize themselves with the terms of this policy as well as procedures for responding to complaint(s) of alleged child/youth abuse or neglect.

Determining Reasonable Suspicion: Only ask the victim what is necessary to feel there is reasonable suspicion to make a report. The goal is to avoid multiple extensive interviews of the victim. Especially if sexual abuse is suspected, leave detailed questions for professional interviewers.

Upon allegations of child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse or neglect—especially against child/youth worker or volunteer—the following steps will be taken:

1. Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
2. If the report alleges abuse or harassment of a minor, either the original witness or notified staff member will:
 - a. immediately ensure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law (within 48 hours).
 - b. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the minor UNLESS (a) parent/guardian are the accused or (b) the accused offender is also a minor.

3. Notification of Executive Session, who will assist applicable staff to make immediate decisions concerning the temporary removal of the accused from any contact with children or youth until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.
4. Complete an “Incident Report” (see page 12) and notify appropriate leadership including a designated attorney. Any possible media requests will be handled by the Director of Communications with advice from the designated attorney taking care to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Additional Steps Required—Special Circumstances

1. If the report is against a **teaching elder (pastor)**: Reporting person will notify BMPC Personnel Committee and Clerk of Session who shall send a written statement of allegation to the stated clerk of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. This written statement of allegation shall trigger the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II*.
2. If the report is against a **ruling elder**: BMPC Senior Pastor or Clerk of Session will notify the session that an allegation of offense has been received against an elder that triggers the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II*.
3. If the report is against another **minor**: Reporting person will contact law enforcement/ civil agencies IMMEDIATELY AND PRIOR to informing parents to determine what identifying information may be disclosed—in order to protect the identities of all minors.
4. Provide pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s), accused, family members).
5. Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

MANDATORY RULES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

BMPC shall ensure that the following measures be in place and actions taken for activities involving children and youth:

1. **Two-adult rule**: Two adults must always be present in groups of children and youth. All child and youth workers/volunteers must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise. The only exception is if an emergency situation deems this is not immediately possible. Best practice is that the two leaders are non-related to ensure the highest level of accountability. In instances where a second adult cannot be permanently stationed to a single class (for example: when the designated second adult is providing bathroom assistance to younger children), an additional “premises monitor” or supervisor

who patrols hallways and common areas when children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities are taking place. Premises monitors may also observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis and can help fulfill the two-adult rule or rule of three when necessary.

2. **Ratios:** The adult-to-child ratio for all child-related events/activities is 2:10. There shall also be one adult of each gender when there is one or more minors of each gender in a group. Only in emergency situations may the ratios and gender diversity be compromised.

While supervision of 1 adult for every 5 minors (1:5) is preferable, in instances where participating children are ALL over 5 years old, the target minimum ratio is 1 additional adult per 10–12 minors (3:20, 4:30, etc). State guidelines allow for this ratio to be as high as 1:25 (2:50), but leaders are encouraged to make every reasonable effort to secure additional support. Leadership will consider the capability of participants (especially the ability of participants to report) when determining appropriate supervision.

In groups where ANY participant is younger than 5 years old, ratio requirements will meet those of *North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services* requirements for Child Care Providers for the youngest participant.

3. **Classrooms:** When minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times. Verify with Dick re: windows
4. Adult workers/caregivers should respect the privacy of the children to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations (e.g., taking age-appropriate photographs and movies; not taking photographs of minors who are not fully clothed). Adults and minors are required at all times to wear appropriate attire.
5. Age-appropriate training for children and youth should be provided regarding behavior that should be reported to the caregiver or leader of the event.
6. **Restroom Use:** Preschool-aged minors shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who will check the safety of the restroom, then wait outside the door for the child. If assisting younger children in the bathroom, the doors to the facility must remain open.

If on-site at BMPC, elementary school minors and youth may go to the restroom on their own or choose a same-gender “buddy” to accompany them to the restroom. The minor’s supervising adult shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning to the classroom.

If off-site, elementary school age minors shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who shall wait outside the door or stall for the minor. Concerning all children & adults, the supervising adult shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning.

7. **Transportation:** All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with BMPC. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. All drivers transporting minors and vulnerable adults must be over the age of 25 and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier is contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers.
8. **Documentation:** The legal guardians of each minor must provide the appropriate information and medical forms for participation. The information form should include all contacts for legal guardians, emergency medical and insurance information, and Communications Agreement. Each participant should have an “Authorization to Use Likeness” waiver on file. All such forms must be present during activities, in a secure place with restricted access.
9. A **Code of Conduct** as well as a list of prohibited and expected behaviors should be given in written form to participants and legal guardians, as well as discussed thoroughly at the beginning of the minor’s participation in programs. Event-specific guidelines will be reviewed as necessary—especially for off-campus activities.
10. **Housing/Sleeping Requirements:** Adults may only share sleeping quarters with minors when there are two non-related adults at all times. The exception to this rule is for the occasional legal caregiver/child situation or parent/child situation. If a child/youth requires a caregiver, written permission must be kept on record from the child/youth’s parent/legal guardian.
11. Children/youth and adults must maintain different showering and grooming hours at events in which bathrooms and shower rooms are shared in housing.
12. **Prohibited Behaviors:** All volunteers and employees will abide by a code of conduct that identifies prohibited behaviors. Some of these prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:
 - a. Display of sexual affection toward a child/youth.
 - b. Dating or becoming “romantically” involved with anyone under the age of 18.
 - c. Possessing sexually-oriented materials (including printed or online pornography) on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
 - d. Discussion of sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involving children in personal problems or issues.
 - e. Staring at or commenting on children’s bodies.
 - f. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.

- g. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
- h. Having secrets with youth/children.
- i. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children (see Social Networking Code of Conduct)
- j. Working one-on-one with children in a private setting, i.e., where the interaction is not observable and interruptible
- k. Abusing others in anyway, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint (staff/volunteers may not discipline minors by use of physical punishment).
 - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.
 - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually-oriented conversations.
 - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
 - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter.
 - Permit children/youth to engage in: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Parents/Guardians of minors participating in BMPC programs will complete an Emergency Form for each minor, which indicates approved communication methods. This may be updated at any time by the parent/guardian. Best practice is for staff/volunteers to include a “third party” (staff or parent) in communications with a minor (including cell phone, email, text-messaging, chatting, etc.).

Adult staff/volunteers will document and immediately report any unapproved or unsolicited communications with minors to parent and staff—including unusual incidents, disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

If a child or youth reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions to an adult, the person must report this information in the manner of any “suspected abuse.”

SOCIAL NETWORKING CODE OF CONDUCT

BMPC encourages parents to play a role in monitoring their children's and youth interactions with employees/volunteers and via social media.

BMPC will deny social media participation through church-sponsored accounts by individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct. Violations may also result in removal from volunteer position/employment.

Prohibited Actions

- Comments could be reasonably construed to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Sexually-oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Private messages between employees/volunteers and minors not authorized through their Communications Agreement. ***At any point, adult workers/volunteers will provide immediate access to any electronic communications with children/minors for review—they must waive their right to privacy in instances of suspected behavior in violation of this policy. Adult staff/volunteers should also be aware that this includes items saved in the cloud.
- Posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.

SIGNING OF POLICY AND APPLICATION TO SERVE

Each adult engaged in leadership of children/youth programming shall acknowledge receipt of the Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy through signing a verification form. In addition, each person engaged in the child/youth leadership shall consent to required background checks and shall comply with any consequences of a reported incident.

Report of Injury

Time & Place of Injury

Date of Injury: _____ Time: _____ AM PM

Where did the injury occur? _____

Person Injured

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name of Parents/Guardians if minor: _____

Employer: _____

Injuries Sustained: _____

Where was the injured taken (hospital/doctor)? _____

Relationship to Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church?

Member Visitor Volunteer Employee Student/Camper Other

If injury occurred on insured's premises, for what purpose was the injured on the premises?

Who was responsible for supervision at the time of injury? _____

If injury occurred elsewhere, what connection did it have with the insured's operations or activities?

Does the injured party have personal medical insurance that could apply? Yes No

Name of Medical Insurance Company: _____

Full Description of Incident: _____

Witnesses

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Report Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

PRIVACY DISCLAIMER: This form should not be shared with co-workers or other volunteers. Submit form to your immediate supervisor, law enforcement, or other reporting agency. Note: Mandatory reporting laws apply and you are required by law to report this information to local authorities.

Your Information: Name: _____ Title/Position: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____
Supervisor: _____

Injured Person: Name: _____ Age: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____
Parents/Guardians (if a minor): _____

Suspected Perpetrator: Unknown Known
Name: _____ Age: _____
Description: _____

Relationship to the suspected victim: _____
Address or location of suspected abuse: _____

Reason for Report / Details of Incident

Witnesses

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____

Report submitted to: Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
Date: _____ Time: _____
Signature of Receipt of Report: _____

***Did you notify state/local authorities regarding suspected abuse/sexual misconduct?** Yes No

If yes, list agency Name: _____
Name of Contact: _____
Phone: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Report: _____ **Time of Report** _____